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Rachel McAdams

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MEU's Afghan battles said to shock Taliban

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U.S. military leaders praise Marines' work

JON R. ANDERSON/Stars and Stripes

As the 22nd Marine Expeditionary Unit wrapped up its offensive in Afghanistan, Army Maj. Gen. Eric Olson told the Marines at Kandahar Airfield, "You proved to the world the United States of America is going to take this fight to the most dangerous part of Afghanistan unafraid and absolutely determined."

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Scene on Sunday

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News Tracker ... What's new with old news

States

Punch-card lawsuit: The number of punch-card votes not counted because of old or malfunctioning equipment may be small but could affect a close election like the one expected Nov. 2, a civil rights lawyer said Monday in the first punch-card system challenge to go to trial.

The American Civil Liberties Union of Ohio will show that the state's punch-card machines are not uniform and in several counties they are antiquated and don't allow voters to correct mistakes, ACLU attorney Paul Mokey said in his opening statement in U.S. District Court.

In 2000, Ohio's Hamilton County had aging punch-card machines but Franklin County had newer electronic equipment. Franklin reported zero overvotes for president, in which someone voted for two candidates for president, but in Hamilton there were 2,916 overvotes that were disallowed.

"In a close election such as that is predicted in Ohio this fall, those 2,916 votes could make the difference," Mokey said.

Business

Google value: Google Inc. said Monday it would sell 24.6 million shares in its initial public offering at an estimated price range of \$108 to \$135 per share, giving a long-awaited indication of what the leading Internet search company believes it is worth.

Those numbers would value the shares being offered in the IPO, which is expected to happen in August, at \$2.66 billion to \$3.32 billion. However, the amount the company itself expects to raise is \$1.66 billion, because some of the shares are being sold by existing stockholders.

Overall, Google, which is offering only 9 percent of its stock in the IPO, would have a market capitalization of \$29 billion to \$36 billion, counting shares held by insiders.

World

Israeli barrier: Israel's Defense Ministry has mapped out a new route for the separation barrier it is building in the West Bank, complying with a Supreme Court ruling that the original route infringed on Palestinian rights, security officials said Monday.

The new line includes significant changes and runs closer to the so-called Green Line, the frontier between Israel and the West Bank until the 1967 Mideast war, the officials said on condition of anonymity.

In 1967, Israel captured the West Bank from Jordan and the Gaza Strip from Egypt. Palestinians want to establish an independent state on the captured lands.

Nuclear whistle-blower: Israel's Supreme Court upheld on Monday security restrictions placed on nuclear whistle-blower Mordechai Vanunu, limiting his movements and the things he is allowed to say.

Vanunu completed an 18-year prison term in April, but Israel's security establishment decided the man who revealed Israel's nuclear secrets would not be allowed to leave the country or speak to the foreign media, saying he still has state secrets to reveal.

South Asian floods: Authorities recovered more than 100 bodies in eastern India



Glad to be home: Abdul Ghafoor Mahboob, of Culver City, Calif., hugs his mother, Shahbibi, at Los Angeles International Airport on Sunday, upon returning home from Egypt. Mahboob, an American Muslim citizen, said he had been detained and beaten by Egyptian security at Cairo Airport with no explanation since July 16. He said the first night he was detained, officers used a stick to beat him on his thighs and poke his stomach and head. "After that they were just mentally torturing me," Mahboob, 26, who is of Afghan descent, said he was on his way home after spending the last seven months studying Arabic, when he was detained.

while flooding, disease and snakebites killed another 58 people across Bangladesh, officials said Monday, as the toll from monsoon flooding across South Asia crossed 1,000.

The decomposed bodies started surfacing in India's Bihar state as floodwaters began to recede after four days without rain, said Upendra Sharma, a deputy secretary in the state's relief and rehabilitation department.

The new deaths in Bangladesh came as rivers around the capital Dhaka burst their banks, leaving 40 percent of the city of 10 million people under water. Parts of the central business district and two upscale residential areas were submerged.

Accused Army deserter: An accused U.S. Army deserter hospitalized in Japan after living in North Korea for 40 years could meet with U.S. military defense counsel as early as this week, news reports said Monday.

Charles Jenkins, 64, accused of abandoning his Army post in 1965 and defecting to North Korea, came to Japan earlier this month for medical treatment.

Asian bird flu: The European Union extended a ban Monday on imports of poultry products and pet birds from nine Asian countries that were hardest hit by an outbreak of bird flu earlier this year.

The European Commission said the extension would cover imports from Thailand, Cambodia, Indonesia, Japan, Laos, Pakistan, China, South Korea and Vietnam until Dec. 15.

"In some of these countries outbreaks of avian influenza still occur," the EU head of office said in a statement. "The overall disease situation in the area remains unclear."

German tailgating case: A lawyer for a

DaimlerChrysler engineer convicted of causing the death of a young woman and her daughter through high-speed tailgating asked for the man's acquittal Monday, arguing at an appeal hearing that his client's identity was mistaken.

Rolf Fischer, 35, could not have been behind the wheel of the Mercedes that caused the crash, lawyer Georg Prasser said in closing arguments before a state court in the southern German city of Karlsruhe.

Prasser said Fischer, known to his friends as "Turbo Rolf," had filled up at a gas station at 5:22 a.m. on July 14, 2003, and could not have made it to the crash scene by 5:58 a.m. when the Kia compact swerved off the road to avoid a speeding Mercedes.

Prosecutors argued Fischer had more than enough time to have been at the accident site and cited witnesses who described seeing his car at the scene and speeding away.

Bali appeal: Indonesia said Monday that a court ruling curbing the retroactive use of a tough anti-terror law had hampered the case against the alleged leader of the al-Qaida-linked Jemaah Islamiyah terror group.

"We face a difficult situation," said Justice Minister Yusril Mahendra. "The criminal code does not stipulate facilitating [terror] as a crime."

He said militant cleric Abu Bakar Bashir might also be tried under a 1951 emergency law on illegal possession and use of explosives.

Police have accused Bashir of involvement in the Oct. 12, 2002, Bali blasts, which killed 202 people, though formal charges against him have yet to be filed.

Authorities had planned to charge him with violating the anti-terror law, which was passed in the months after the Bali blasts.

Photo and stories from wire services

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Bomber strikes near U.S. base in Mosul; 3 killed

Militants free Egyptian diplomat; Iraqi ministry official gunned down

By PAUL GARWOOD
The Associated Press

BAGHDAD — A suicide car bomber attacked near a U.S. base in the northern Iraqi city of Mosul, assassinating gunned down a senior Interior Ministry official, and militants said they kidnapped two Jordanian truck drivers in spiraling violence that left eight people dead on Monday.

Also on Monday, an Egyptian diplomat held hostage by militants in Iraq for three days was released in good condition, the Egyptian Foreign Ministry said.

Mohammed Mamdouh Helmi Qutb, the third ranking diplomat at the Egyptian mission here, was released Friday as he left his residence, a mosque. Militants said they had taken him to deter Egypt from

sending security experts to help the new Iraqi government.

An Egyptian Foreign Ministry official said on condition of anonymity that Qutb was released after successful negotiations and he was in good condition at the mission's headquarters.

The announcement came just minutes after the pan-Arab television station Al-Jazeera read a statement from the militants saying they had decided to release Qutb because he was a good religious man and had good morals.

In Mosul, employees leaving the base said a Chevrolet sedan drove up and exploded about 50 yards from the gates, setting nearby cars on fire. "It was a suicide operation," base employee Imad Joseph said.

U.S. military spokeswoman



Cars drive past an American security checkpoint set up to detect possible threats and to help curb violence in Baghdad on Monday. The latest violence followed Sunday's start of a delegate selection for a three-day national conference considered a key step in moving the country away from its totalitarian past and toward a democratic future.

Capt. Angela M. Bowman said a woman and a child standing nearby and an Iraqi guard were killed. Three U.S. soldiers and two Iraqi guards were injured.

In the latest assassination of an Iraqi politician, Col. Musab al-Awadi and his guards had just left his house in al-Baya neighborhood in Baghdad when gunmen shot them dead in a drive-by attack, according to Sabah Kadhim, an Interior Ministry spokesman.

Al-Awadi was the ministry's deputy chief of tribal affairs.

George Sada, spokesman for interim Prime Minister Ayad Alawi, said the abductions were affecting Iraq's reconstruction, because some countries were now preventing their citizens — laborers and experts alike — from coming to help. Still, the kidnappings "might delay the process but they are not going to stop it."

Many of those abducted have been truck drivers bringing needed supplies. Adel Abu Hawli, a manager for Kuwait's Al-Roomi Shipping Agency, said the wave of kidnappings has forced transport costs up "50 to 65 percent" and made it harder to find drivers to work in Iraq.

"We've seen since the Philippines government acceded to the demands of the terrorists a whole spate of new hostage taking," Australian Foreign Minister Alex-

ander Downer said. "And I'm afraid that's what inevitably is going to happen in these circumstances." Militants holding the two Jordanian drivers threatened to kill them in 72 hours if their Jordanian employer did not stop doing business with the American military.

In a video obtained by Associated Press Television News, the men, identified as Fayed Said al-Udwan and Ahmed Salama Hassan, said they were being treated well and pleaded with their company to meet the kidnappers' demands. Hassan called on all Arabs and Muslims "not to deal with the Americans and to aid the militants." Al-Udwan said he was "regretful," and if he could turn back time he would not have worked with the company.

In two other videos aired Monday on Arab television, militants said they had abducted two Pakistanis and an Iraqi driver, and separate kidnappers extended a deadline for their demands to be met for the release of seven foreign drivers — three Kenyans, three Indians and an Egyptian. It was unclear how long the deadline had been extended.

The drivers' employer, the Kuwait and Gulf Link Transport Co., said militants have not demanded a ransom, and that it was confident that "Iraqi friends" involved in negotiations would help secure their release.

Militants warn Italy to get out of Iraq

By MAAMOUN YOUSSEF
The Associated Press

CAIRO, Egypt — Al-Qaida-linked Islamic militants on Monday threatened to "shake the earth" everywhere in Italy if Rome does not withdraw troops from Iraq.

The Internet statement attributed to the Abu Hafs al-Masri Brigades, the second such threat against the government of Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi in two weeks, was posted on a Web site known for carrying materials from Islamic militants.

"This is a warning and a threat to the Italian government, who devoted itself to serving the criminal American crusade, to follow suit with those who preceded you and leave the land of Iraq," the statement said. "Otherwise, we will change our correspondence into words of blood and shake the earth everywhere in your lands."

The statement also said Italian prime minister: "If you have not heard this threat, then we will make you hear it in Rome, in every place and under the feet of your people, with Allah's will. We give you, Berlusconi, a few days only, then you will see things that displease you," it said.

The Italian government had no immediate comment. In the past, it has ignored such threats. There was no way to verify the authenticity of the statement.

U.S. officials and some terrorism experts believe Abu Hafs al-Masri, which claimed responsibility for the March 2003 bombings that killed more than 200 people in Madrid, lacks credibility and has only tenuous ties to al-Qaida. It has been indicted for its role in ties it almost certainly had no involvement, including blackouts in North America and Britain.

A July 16 statement by the same group, threatening to burn Italy if Berlusconi, a staunch supporter of President Bush, was not removed from office. The premier has remained steadfast, though many Italians have called for a troops' withdrawal.

On Saturday, another group, the Tawhid Islamic Group, warned Australia and Italy to withdraw their forces from Iraq. Australian Prime Minister John Howard said the government would ignore the threat.

Italy sent 3,000 troops to Iraq after the ouster of Saddam Hussein to help rebuild the country. The contingent is based in the southern city of Nasiriyah. Australia has nearly 900 troops in and around Iraq.

U.S. deaths in Iraq

By The Associated Press

As of Friday, 899 U.S. servicemen have died since the beginning of military operations in Iraq in March 2003, according to the Defense Department. Of those, 665 died as a result of hostile action and 234 died of nonhostile causes. The department did not provide an update over the weekend.

The British military has reported 60 deaths; Italy, 18, Spain, eight, Bulgaria and Poland, six each; Ukraine, four; Slovakia, three; Thailand, two; Denmark, El Salvador, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia and the Netherlands have reported one death each. Since

May 1, 2003, when President Bush declared that major combat operations in Iraq had ended, 761 U.S. troops have died — 556 as a result of hostile action and 205 of nonhostile causes.

The latest deaths reported by the U.S. Central Command:

■ One soldier died after his convoy was attacked with an explosive near Baiji on Saturday.

The latest identifications reported by the Department of Defense:

■ Army Pvt. 1st Class Terey J. Dantzler, 22, Columbia, La.; died Thursday, in Samarra when an explosive detonated near his vehicle; assigned to the Army's 66th Transportation Company; Kaiserslautern, Germany.

U.S. presses NATO to hasten training of Iraqis

By PAUL GEITNER
The Associated Press

BRUSSELS, Belgium — The United States stepped up pressure Monday on its NATO allies Monday to get moving on a promised mission to train Iraq's armed forces, which has been held up by French-led resistance to doing it inside the country.

"NATO needs to act quickly to give the Iraqi government and people the support they so desperately need," U.S. Ambassador to NATO Nicholas Burns said, two days before the alliance's policy-making body was to take up the request.

NATO Secretary-General Jaap de Hoop Scheffer said he "strongly hopes" ambassadors will agree "this week" on how to carry out training in Iraq and outside Iraq, which was pledged by NATO leaders at a summit last month in Turkey.

So far NATO's role has been limited to providing logistical backup to the Polish-led multinational division working with the U.S.-led coalition in Iraq.

"I agree wholeheartedly with the NATO secretary general that the alliance should decide this week to establish a NATO training mission in Iraq," Burns said in his statement. "That is what our leaders decided in Istanbul."

The issue is touchy, though, because French President Jacques Chirac made clear at the summit he did not want a visible NATO presence inside Iraq.

Chirac suggested the training be done outside the country or be handled by nations on a bilateral level. U.S. officials say a meaningful cooperation must include NATO involvement on the ground in Iraq.

Diplomats in Brussels were divided on whether the differences would escalate into an-

other Franco-U.S. clash or a compromise could be found, such as setting up a presence in Iraq but without a NATO flag.

Another trans-Atlantic dispute — over whether extra troops to help protect October's presidential elections in Afghanistan could come from NATO's new rapid response force — was fanned last week with language that allowed each side to claim victory.

The Italian battalion being sent is normally assigned to the elite force. Burns hailed it as the first deployment, but NATO noted only that the battalion was "an element" of the force — and was unclear Monday whether the Italians would be replaced while they were in Afghanistan.

France and other NATO members argued the force should be saved for emergencies, not used for peace-keeping. Washington had pressed the idea as a way for European allies to stretch their troop commitments.

Marine unit praised for action in Afghanistan

BY JON R. ANDERSON

Stars and Stripes

KANDAHAR AIRFIELD, Afghanistan — Top military leaders in Afghanistan are hailing a Marine offensive deep inside southern Afghanistan's Uruzgan Province as the most successful operation here since the 2001 invasion.



Olson

Tucked away in southern Afghanistan's rugged mountains, the province has provided a sanctuary for Taliban holdouts and their al-Qaida supporters, say officials.

22nd MEU credited with killing more than 100 Taliban, al-Qaida in southern region

But not anymore.

The Marine offensive, which began in March and is just now wrapping up, was the first incursion into the area by conventional forces.

The Marines are credited with killing more than 100 Taliban and al-Qaida fighters during weeks of running gunbattles in an area completely avoided by conventional U.S. forces until their arrival.

"You're the best this place has ever seen," Army Maj. Gen. Eric Olson, the top field commander in Afghanistan, told a

gathering of Marines at Kandahar Airfield this weekend.

The Marine's offensive, he said, put the Taliban on the run in their own back yard.

"Never again can they use that place as a sanctuary," said Olson. "You proved to the world the United States of America is going to take this fight to the most dangerous part of Afghanistan unafraid and absolutely determined."

Olson said the Marine offensive also caught the Taliban off guard.

"You rocked him back on his heels. You

knocked him on his ass.

"You went places that has never seen an American."

"You went to find him on his turf, on his terms, on his ground and kicked him in the ass."

"And that surprised him."

Olson said the MEU's performance had also "made an impression on the most senior leaders."

Quoting Lt. Gen. David Barno, the overall commander of U.S. efforts in Afghanistan, Olson said,

"Never in the history of Operation Enduring Freedom has there been an offensive operation like the one the 22nd MEU conducted. Never have we been this successful. You have made history here."

Half of 22nd MEU to get five-month break before Iraq duty

Light infantry unit to train on time off before it heads to war zone in Middle East

BY JON ANDERSON

Stars and Stripes

KANDAHAR AIRFIELD, Afghanistan — Many Marines of the 22nd Marine Expeditionary Unit will barely get a chance to clean off the dust from Afghanistan before they find themselves chewing on Iraqi sand.

Even with their six-month Afghanistan deployment extended by a month so they could continue their push through southern Afghanistan, many Marines said they have to prepare now for their next tour.

"It's a sign of the times," said Col. Kenneth McKenzie Jr., commander of the Camp Lejeune, N.C.-based 22nd MEU. "This has all happened since Iraq's last flare-up." McKenzie said, "Everything is in a state of flux."

Each of the Marine Corps' seven MEUs are task forces that bring together infantry, artillery, aviation, logistics and other units into one 2,300-strong package.

Even McKenzie's own headquarters will likely be thrown back into the mix sooner rather than later.

"I think we'll end up sometime next year," McKenzie said. Of the three MEUs based at Camp Lejeune, the 24th MEU is already in Iraq and the 26th MEU will hand off with the 24th as it returns to port.

"Unless they accept a gap, which is possible, we'll go early," McKenzie said.

But there's no doubt for many within the MEU.

The MEU's 800-strong light infantry contingent — 1st Battalion, 6th Marines — has already been told to expect to ship out to Iraq within five months after it returns home in September.

Usually, Marines returning from overseas deployments get 12 to 18 months before pushing back out again. But not these days.

"That's all out the window now," said Capt. Paul Merida, commander of 1st Battalion's Company C. "We're spread pretty thin. If something were to happen somewhere else, I don't know who we'd send."

Complicating matters is the fact that 1st Battalion will lose about half of its Marines once it returns from Afghanistan.

Of the 800 Marines in the unit, said command Sgt. Maj. Tom Hall, "only 412 will be deployed with us." The rest will move to new duty assignments or get out of the Marine Corps.

"We're going to lose a lot of our small unit leaders," said Merida, adding that they will not be replaced by Marines of equal rank and experience.



JON R. ANDERSON/Stars and Stripes

Capt. Paul Merida of the 22nd Marine Expeditionary Unit's Battalion Landing Team 1/6 prepares his Marines for upcoming duty in Iraq even as the unit is wrapping up combat operations in Afghanistan.

Instead, officials anticipate receiving only an influx of fresh recruits straight from boot camp. And most of those will probably come after the new year.

"That's only going to give us about two months to get them trained and ready for combat before we leave for Iraq," said Merida. "It's going to be tough."

Meanwhile, he added, junior Marines in the unit will have to step up and fill those key leadership roles.

"It's entirely possible that we'll see squads being led by lance corporals," a position usually reserved for sergeants, two ranks higher.

Combat experience from Afghanistan will help mitigate that, said Merida, but will only go so far.

That's why, even as the MEU is beginning its withdrawal, leaders like Merida have begun training for Iraq.

Pep talk

"Look around," Merida told a group of his Marines in the middle of training this weekend in a corner of Kandahar's heat-baked airfield. "The guys that are going to lead this platoon in Iraq are sitting right here, right now. You're it."

"Whether this unit is successful in Iraq or not depends on what you do between now and the next few months," Merida said. "Because once those recruits get off the busses from the School of Infantry, it's going to be too late."

The Marines — some less than two years out of high school — nodded their heads solemnly.

"It's not just about taking care of yourself any more. You've got to start thinking about how you're going to lead four, maybe 12 other Marines," said Merida. "You've got to get your [expletive] together now, because that's what it's going to take to bring you and them home alive."

Lance Cpl. William Yarborough cradled his assault rifle, listening intently, a gold cross patch awkwardly out of the collar of desert fatigues, the words "Death Dealer" tattooed onto his right arm in rolling black script.

"It's going to be hard getting everyone prepared," he said later. He thinks he'll be ready, though, to take over a squad when his time comes.

"I'm just going to give my Marines the hardest time they've ever had in their lives and do whatever I can to take care of them," he said. "We'll be ready."

Preparations

To help Marines like Yarborough get ready, leaders are preparing a slew of classes as the MEU makes its way back to a three-ship armada off Kuwait in the coming days for the long trip through the Mediterranean and across the Atlantic.

"When we get to Kuwait, we're going to really turn the heat up with a very intensive training schedule," said battalion Command Sgt. Maj. Hall.

3 GIs wounded in bomb blast

The Associated Press

KANDAHAR, Afghanistan — A bomb exploded near a U.S. military vehicle in southeastern Afghanistan on Monday, injuring three American soldiers, the military said. A newly appointed police chief escaped a similar blast in a key southern city.

The three soldiers were traveling in an armored Humvee 35 miles east of Qalat, the capital of troubled Zabul province, when it was damaged by a homemade bomb, said American spokesman Maj. Rick Best.

Best said the three suffered burns and their injuries were not critical. "They should be fine," he said.

The wounded soldiers were evacuated to a large American base at Kandahar, Afghanistan's main southern city and the scene of another explosion Monday.

The remote-controlled bomb went off near a vehicle carrying the newly appointed chief of police for Kandahar province, damaging his car but injuring no one.

Khan Mohammed, a former provincial army commander who was appointed police chief on Sunday, was going to his office when the bomb went off, said Salim Khan, a deputy police chief.

Khan blamed Taliban insurgents for the attack, but offered no evidence to back up his claim.

Mohammed, contacted by The Associated Press, confirmed the attack and vowed to "wipe out terrorists" from his area.

Kandahar and Zabul provinces have seen frequent attacks against U.S. and Afghan troops, police and government officials since Afghanistan's former Taliban regime was ousted as a result of U.S.-led operations in late 2001.

Taliban insurgents have asked police and other Afghan officials not to work for the coalition forces and Afghan President Hamid Karzai.

And the Marines shouldn't expect to see Camp Lejeune much once they return.

Exercises are already slated at Fort Bragg, N.C. in November, followed by maneuvers in California.

"Out of the five months between our deployments, we'll be gone about two and half months," said Hall. "We don't have time to mess around."

E-mail Jon Anderson at: andersonj@mail.estripes.osd.mil

Iraq wary of normalizing ties with Israel

BY SAM F. GHATTAS

The Associated Press

BEIRUT, Lebanon — Moving to open up to Iraq's fellow Arabs, its interim prime minister on Monday sought to calm Arab suspicions that Baghdad may be breaking ranks and normalizing relations with Israel, saying his country would not do so before other Arabs make the move as part of a Mideast settlement.

Ayad Allawi also denied reports that Israelis are operating in Iraq and said a new passport policy does not mean Iraq can travel to the Jewish state.

Arab media and individuals have long speculated that the United States invaded Iraq to weaken a state seen as a threat to Israel and to allow Israel to make inroads in the Arab world. Toppled Iraqi leader Saddam Hussein had been a vocal opponent of Israel and funded hard-line Palestinian groups.

Further fueling the suspicion about Israeli involvement were recent reports, mostly in Arab media, that Israel has established



Interim Iraqi Prime Minister Ayad Allawi speaks Monday during a news conference in Lebanon. Allawi said Baghdad will not make any unilateral moves to normalize relations with Israel before other Arabs do as part of a Mideast settlement.

a presence in Iraq.

"Future relations with Israel are determined by two issues: international resolutions and a just and comprehensive peace that has been adopted by Arab leaderships, including the Palestinian leadership. Iraq will not take any

unilateral action on a settlement with Israel outside those two frameworks," Allawi said.

He described as "absolutely false" Arab media reports that Israeli intelligence agents were operating out of Iraq.

"We regrettably hear reports in

the Arab press that there are 10,000 Israelis and stories that Iraq is being used as a base for Israeli intelligence — this is inaccurate and false," he said.

"Iraq and its territory will not be a base for any action hostile to any Arab country."

The Israeli angle was played up again in newspaper reports Monday. Ashraq al-Awsat, a Saudi-owned pan-Arab daily, reported in a banner front-page headline that: "Iraq cancels ban on travel to Israel."

It quoted the Passport Office director in its report on deleting the phrase in Iraqi passports that read: "allowed to travel to all world countries except Israel."

Allawi said this was nonsense. He said an Iraqi government decision to remove the names of black-listed countries from new passports was misconstrued as permission to visit Israel.

"Our situation [now] is similar to any other Arab country," Allawi said, adding that it is up to authorities to decide whether the travel ban has been violated.

Although it stayed on the side-

lines, Israel was a strong supporter of the U.S.-led invasion of Iraq. Saddam fired Scud missiles on Tel Aviv during the 1991 Persian Gulf War that evicted Iraqi forces from Kuwait.

Allawi is on his first regional tour since taking office. He has already visited Jordan, Egypt and Syria and will later head to the United Arab Emirates, Saudi Arabia and Kuwait.

During his tour, Allawi stressed that he was opening a new page with the nations, some of which were alienated by Saddam. Iraqi officials hope close security coordination with Arab nations can curb violence in Iraq.

Allawi sought assistance in security matters. In Egypt, he asked for help in getting Arab and Islamic countries to contribute to a force to protect U.N. staff in Iraq. In Syria, control of border infiltration along the border was raised.

In Lebanon, a nation which opposed the U.S.-led invasion, Allawi tackled economic issues during a meeting with Prime Minister Rafik Hariri.

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Saddam writing poetry in prison, paper reports

BY ROBERT BARR

The Associated Press

LONDON — Saddam Hussein appears depressed and demoralized in solitary confinement, spending his time writing poetry, tending a garden and reading the Quran, according to a report published Monday in The Guardian newspaper.

One of Saddam's poems is about George Bush, though the report did not specify whether that referred to President Bush or his father, Saddam's foe in the 1991 Persian Gulf War.

The newspaper quoted Bakhtiar Amin, the human rights minister in the new Iraqi government, who said he had visited Saddam's cell on Saturday. Amin said he did not speak to the former Iraqi leader.

Bakhtiar said Saddam appeared "in good health and being kept in good conditions," but he "appeared demoralized and dejected," The Guardian reported.

Saddam's air-conditioned cell in a U.S. military prison is 10 feet wide and 13 feet long, Amin said. Saddam is not allowed to mix with other prisoners.

Amin had little to report on Saddam's poetry. "One of the poems is about George Bush, but I had no time to read it," Amin said.

He reported that Saddam was being treated for high blood pressure and a chronic prostate infection, and was gaining weight after losing 11 pounds during a time when he resisted all fatty foods.

Saddam and other detainees get an MRE (Meals, Ready to Eat) breakfast, and hot food twice a day, Amin said. Dessert might include oranges, apples, pears or plums, but Saddam also likes American muffins and cookies,

The Guardian quoted Amin as saying.

Saddam is not allowed newspapers, TV or radio, but has access to 145 books — mostly travel books and novels — donated by the Red Cross.

Amin said Saddam tends a garden during his daily three-hour exercise period.

"He is looking after a few bushes and shrubs and has even placed a circle of white stones around a small palm tree," said Amin.

Amin, a Kurd from Kirkuk, was

reportedly the first member of the new Iraqi government to visit Saddam.

During his visit, Amin said he met Ali Hassan al-Majid, also known as Chemical Ali, who allegedly ordered the use of chemical weapons against Kurds in the late 1980s; Saddam's half-brother, Barzan al-Tikriti, a former intelligence chief who was Iraq's ambassador to the United Nations in Geneva until 1998; and Saddam's personal secretary, Abid Hamid Mahmud al-Tikriti.

Amin said he was approached by al-Tikriti, who was standing next to Ali Hassan al-Majid.

"Minister, what are you doing here?" Amin quoted al-Tikriti as saying. "I am not like the others, I am not like Ali Hassan al-Majid." Al-Tikriti asked that the message be passed on to Kurds, and to new Iraqi Prime Minister Ayad Allawi.



Saddam

1st AD trans, spouses sing Bell's praises

Couples say general and team have kept their word of listening to, aiding families of deployed soldiers

By TERRY BOYD

Stars and Stripes

BAUMHOLDER, Germany — Gen. B.B. Bell's activism and visibility during the 1st Armored Division's 90-day extension in Iraq is still generating accolades from Germany-based 1st AD spouses, who credit the U.S. Army Europe commander and his staff for tirelessly delivering care-by-base assistance.

But rather than broad, elemental changes in policy and regulations, it appears that Bell's problem-solving tour of 1st AD bases across Germany in April was part local initiative and part evolution of a trend that began in the late 1980s.

Army officials realized the only way to keep soldiers is to take care of soldiers and families, said Wayne V. Hall, public affairs officer for Well-Being Joint Office, part of the Pentagon. "(Family) well-being is the human dimension of Army readiness. It's a direction the Army's been headed in a while now."

A commander's ace in the hole is his authority to give exceptions to policy. Regulations are guidelines for a commander to follow upon his professional judgment, Hall said. What has changed is a commander's view of how Army needs and what benefits the soldier interest, he said.

When Betty Harter tried to help her husband, Capt. Robert Harter, change his next assignment while he was deployed with the 1st AD, it was an experience unlike any she had as a military spouse.

First, Bell and his staff came to Baumholder, where the Harters are based with the 47th Forward Support Battalion. Then Bell told the crowd at a meeting to contact

him through his staff with any problems they were having.

In a matter of days, the Harters got their first choice — the National Training Center at Fort Irwin, Calif. — rather than Robert Harter's original assignment to the 18th Airborne Corps at Fort Bragg, N.C. Betty Harter said she was amazed that when she e-mailed the general, Bell's staff responded the next day.

"I can e-mail family and not get a response that quickly," she said. The whole process of changing her husband's assignment took 12 days. "It was," Betty Harter said, snapping her fingers, "completely amazing."

"Even if I didn't get what we asked for, the fact was, they kept us informed," Betty Harter said.

That wasn't always the case.

Describing herself as an independent woman, Betty Harter said she found her first months as an Army wife "frustrating." She remembers a time only a couple of years ago when spouses couldn't even get their husbands' leave and travel statements. "Now we can get them online," she said.

The Army is finally able to "empower spouses," Robert Harter said, which makes being a deployed soldier much easier. It also made the decision to re-enlist much easier.

"I'm sticking around," Robert Harter said. "I know there will be more deployments and more time away from the family. But this [extension] has been a positive. Yes, 15 months is a long time. It was extremely hard. But knowing my wife was able to get things done independently of whether I'm here or somewhere else ... gave me much more peace of mind." It was a big relief.

"It would be very depressing

for me if I was trying to get something done, and the only word I was getting was, 'No.'"

"No" is a word Army families are hearing less often, Army officials said.

Cutting through red tape to say "yes" to 1st AD families during the extension didn't demand a change of policy, but new ways of thinking, said Brig. Gen. Russell Frutiger, USAREUR deputy chief of staff, personnel, and Bell's point man at USAREUR's Heidelberg headquarters during the extension.

"We broke no regulations," Frutiger said. "It was always about changing attitudes ... about changing philosophy in dealing with day-to-day bureaucracy. We cut through the bureaucracy and in 99.9 percent of cases, we were able to give spouses what they wanted."

That said, every one of the hundreds of cases was different, and luck sometimes played a role. For example, one spouse resigned her on-base job, thinking her family would be moving when her husband scheduled to return in April.

When she read text regulations prohibited her from returning to work after the extension was announced, Frutiger found her resignation hadn't gone through the system. "It would have been tough for me to reverse that," he said.

The fact that Frutiger and company were exploring every avenue won over a lot of 1st AD spouses.



TERRY BOYD/Stars and Stripes

Nishonda James, left, and April Speight say Gen. B.B. Bell and his staff gave them a huge morale boost by helping with follow-on assignments after their husbands' deployments to Iraq were extended in April. "They were awesome," Speight said. "You could tell they cared as much as we did."

In the end, a big morale booster was simply Bell and Frutiger's style, Baumholder-based spouses said. "Anyone has anything bad to say about Gen. Bell, tell them to come talk to me," Nishonda James said.

In James' case, 1st AD officials helped her change the next assignment for her husband, Staff Sgt. Ronald James, 47th FSB, who returned from Iraq on June 19.

Bell came into meetings with families and had staff members stand up and give out their e-mail addresses, inviting spouses to contact them directly about problems, said James and her friend April Speight. Speight's husband, Capt. Kenneth Speight, is also assigned to the 47th FSB.

Nishonda James and April Speight both said they were initially skeptical of Bell's promises. But when Bell came to Baumholder with his entire staff, then followed up immediately, they were convinced.

"They were awesome," April Speight said. "You could tell they cared as much as we did."

Frutiger called the reaction to the 1st AD extension "one of the most rewarding things I've done."

Is it the harbinger of things to come? Yes, Frutiger said — as long as he has anything to do with it. "There's no way I would let my people go back and change the attitude we have today."

E-mail Terry Boyd at: boyd@mail.strips.osd.mil

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Change of command

RAF HYTHE, England — U.S. Army Lt. Col. Martin G. Binder has taken command of the U.S. Army's Combat Equipment Battalion at RAF Hythe.

He took over from Lt. Col. Raymond R. Langlais Jr. in a ceremony last week at the facility. Langlais has been in command since July 2002 and is moving to an assignment at the office of the deputy chief of staff for logistics at the Department of Army in the Pentagon.

Binder, accompanied by his wife, Gaile, and daughters Kathleen and Kelly, comes to England from the office of the deputy chief of staff for operations with the Department of Army at the Pentagon.

Search on for dhov

U.S. and British sailors continue to search for a dhov that sank Thursday night when it collided with the USS John F. Kennedy aircraft carrier in the Persian Gulf.

No survivors or remains from the small ship have been found,

though a debris field was located. No U.S. personnel were injured.

Searching are the USS Dexters, a mine countermeasures ship, and the HMS Echo, a British hydrographic and oceanographic survey vessel, according to a 5th Fleet news release. There is nothing to indicate the incident was anything more than an accident, said Cmdr. James Graybeal, 5th Fleet spokesman.

Terminal to reopen

The passenger terminal at Rhein-Main Air Base, Germany, will begin a phased reopening Tuesday to restore passenger services in the main building by Wednesday.

The terminal shifted operations to two alternate locations after flooding caused by thunderstorms Friday.

Space available flights have also now resumed.

Though operations will return to the main terminal, passengers should expect slight operational delays, according to a statement issued by the Rhein-Main public affairs office.

From staff reports

Photos from the Front

Presented by Stars and Stripes Advertising & AIG Europe



ABOVE Capt. William Boyd, left, points out features on the plans for a women's center to 1st Lt. Christine Ray and Maj. Seth Huffer at the Asadabad Provincial Reconstruction Team headquarters in Afghanistan.

Stewart L. Cole/U.S. Army

RIGHT Capt. Karyn Ayers, 48th Medical Group family practitioner, listens to a child's breathing patterns in an effort to determine what kind of medical treatment she needs during the MedTag 2004 exercise in South Africa. Ayers is one of a team of medical personnel from the 48th Medical Group who saw more than 600 patients on their first day of the exercise.

Doris Lohr/U.S. Air Force



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USAREUR announces top NCO, GI honors

BY JESSICA INIGO

Stars and Stripes

Two U.S. Army Europe soldiers proved they could take on whatever comes their way during a competition in Grafenwöhr and were named Noncommissioned Officer and Soldier of the Year last week.

Now, Staff Sgt. James P. Rehl, an operating room specialist with 67th Forward Surgical Team, in Giebelstadt, Germany, and Spc. Megan Pitts, an intelligence analyst with Headquarters and Headquarters Detachment, 14th Transportation Battalion, in Vicenza, Italy, will compete at the Department of the Army level in September.

The Grafenwöhr competition was held from July 12-15 and included evaluations on situational exercises, M-16 marksmanship skills, day and night land naviga-

tion, a written exam, and an oral board.

Both troops received awards ranging from savings bonds to Airline tickets, as well as the Army Commendation Medal from USAREUR.

The DA-level competition in September is typically a week-long event beginning with an Army physical fitness test, and then continues on to a written exam and common task testing. Next, there are more situational exercises, including infantry skills, nuclear, biological and chemical testing, and a road march with full battle-rattle that leads the troops into a war-simulated zone where anything could be thrown their way.

Besides the hands-on testing, weapons qualification and land navigation posing challenges for the competing troops, there will also be a board appearance at the end of the DA competition.

Rehl said he's going to study harder, train more, and practice smarter for the DA-level competition. A team of troops from his section is helping him prepare by setting up soldier tasks and watching his performance.

"We've put together this surgical team to observe me. So, whether the person is a private or a sergeant first class, they will ensure I'm doing the tasks to standard," Rehl said. "We'll see what happens."

Pitts said she was also taking several weeks until the competition to become more proficient, especially in the tactical portion of the competition.

"I've been working on the physical aspect of it, but I need to start getting into the groove of the tactical portion," she said. "I'm looking forward, it'll be fun."

Email Jessica Inigo at: jinigo@mail.strips.osd.mil



Courtesy of the U.S. Army

Gen. B.B. Bell, commander, U.S. Army Europe, speaks after awarding the Army Commendation Medal for meritorious achievement to Staff Sgt. James Rehl, 67th Forward Surgical Team, and Spc. Megan Pitts, Headquarters and Headquarters Detachment, 14th Transportation Battalion.

Tae-Bo creator gives tips to U.S. troops in Germany



KRISTEN GOLBY/Courtesy of the U.S. Army

Amanda Harris gets advice on the finer points of Tae-Bo from Tae-Bo creator Billy Blanks at a clinic conducted Friday morning the Fitline Fitness Center in Schweinfurt, Germany. Blanks and his daughter, Shellie Blanks-Cimarosti, will conduct the Spirit and Body Tae-Bo Tour on the following days: Wednesday in Wiesbaden; Thursday in Giessen; Friday in Hanau; and Saturday in Baumholder.

Army looks to recruit through NASCAR displays

The Associated Press

LOUDON, N.H. — Race fans who visited one booth at New Hampshire International Speedway over the weekend may get a call later from the Army.

Recruiters were at the NASCAR event to promote the Army. They used some high tech equipment to get the attention of young men and women who might later want to join.

Besides sponsoring NASCAR driver Joe Nemechek — whose nickname is G.I. Joe — the Army had a multimillion dollar display at the track. Any one signing a waiver to enter and play its computer games may hear from a recruiter later.

"We want people to see the Army," said Mike Godfrey, the Army's tour manager.

The booth has eight computers loaded with a combat simulation game. Fans also could test their skills on simulators for race cars and the pit crew.

One of the most popular simulators was the Shadow, the tactical unmanned aerial vehicle that has

been used to track Osama bin Laden. Shadow was mounted on the ground, but inside a nearby tent, race fans used its software to find tanks. Those who were successful won "Army of One" T-shirts.



Nemechek

To help spread the word, six marketing agents, eight Army officers and 28 canvassing women greeted race fans. They expected 7,000 people to stop by the booth over the weekend.

Heat takes out power at Naval Station Rota

BY SCOTT SCHONAUER

Stars and Stripes

NAVAL STATION ROTA, Spain — The Navy issued a heat warning for Naval Station Rota on Monday as soaring temperatures in southern Spain knocked out power to tens of thousands of residents.

Most buildings at the base, jointly used by the Spanish and U.S. navies, were without power for nearly two hours. The blackout started around 1:45 p.m., the hottest part of the day. Some buildings operated on generator power until commercial electricity returned.

More than 1 million people were without power in the province of Cadiz, the El Pais newspaper reported on its Web site.

Temperatures at the naval station reached 98 degrees, according to the Rota-based U.S. Naval European Meteorology and

Oceanography Center. The base issued a high temperature warning — which is issued when temperatures exceed 95 degrees — and warned people to take precautions against heatstroke, heat cramps and heat exhaustion.

Southern Spain and Portugal have experienced extremely hot temperatures the last three days. The mercury in Rota rose to 100 on Sunday, 103 on Saturday and 101 on Friday, according to NEMOC. The center forecasts a high temperature in the low 90s on Tuesday.

Between 6,000 and 7,000 military and civilian personnel and their families are based in Rota.

The heat wave killed two people in Spain — one in Cordoba and another in Jaen — this past weekend, Spanish health officials reported.

Email Scott Schonauer at: schonauers@mail.strips.osd.mil

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IN THE STATES

Man sues over right to die for wife in Florida

The Associated Press

TAMPA, Fla. — Gov. Jeb Bush forced Terri Schiavo from her deathbed, forcibly operated on her and is now force-feeding her against her will, the woman's husband said in written arguments filed Monday to the Florida Supreme Court.

Terri Schiavo, who for years has been at the center of a bitter right-to-die case, was "stripped of her most intimate personal rights," wrote Michael Schiavo's attorney, George Felos, in documents challenging the law keeping the 40-year-old disabled woman alive.

Michael Schiavo has sued Bush over "Terri's Law," the measure Bush pushed through the Legislature in October as Michael Schiavo removed the feeding tube keeping his wife alive. Terri Schiavo had gone six days without food or water and was in the process of dying when the governor ordered her feedings resumed.

A spokesman for Bush said Monday the governor's office had not yet seen the filing and could not comment.

Arguments are scheduled before the Florida Supreme Court on Aug. 31.

U.S. human rights reputation reeling

Abu Ghraib prison scandal makes it harder for America to push reform abroad

BY GEORGE GEDDA

The Associated Press

WASHINGTON — For a government that routinely lectures foreign countries on their human rights failings, this has been a very difficult year for the United States.

The abuses of prisoners at Abu Ghraib prison and the disclosure of government memos that seemed to justify torture as an interrogation technique have led to charges the United States has no moral authority to stand in judgment of others.

When the United States inveighed against Sudan's recent election to a seat on the U.N. Commission for Human Rights, Sudanese diplomat Omar Bashir Manis said it was ironic that Washington raised objections given the "atrocities" American forces committed at Abu Ghraib.

Sudan's election to a seat "is not at all different" from the United States winning a seat, said Manis, whose government is accused of uprooting 1.2 million Sudanese in the Darfur region.

Although many might question his suggestion of moral equivalence between the United States and Sudan on rights performance, the allegations have been damaging for the Bush administration.

"I have been particularly appalled," said the State Department's top official for human rights, Lorne Craner, alluding to Abu Ghraib's impact.

Craner oversees the "name them and

The abuses of prisoners at Abu Ghraib prison and the disclosure of government memos that seemed to justify torture as an interrogation technique have led to charges the United States has no moral authority to stand in judgment of others.

shame them" annual agency report on rights practices worldwide.

He said the United States can retain the moral high ground only by insisting that those responsible for the Abu Ghraib abuses be held accountable.

Six U.S. military police soldiers face charges in the scandal; one other has pleaded guilty and has been sentenced to a year in prison. The role of military intelligence in the scandal is under investigation.

President Bush signed a declaration in 2002 saying he had the authority to ignore international rules for treatment of captives.

He says no orders have been given to torture or mistreat prisoners.

Richard Dicker, an international law expert at Human Rights Watch, believes post-Abu Ghraib image recovery won't be easy. "A lot of damage has been done," he said.

The extent of U.S. prisoner mistreatment in both Iraq and Afghanistan was disclosed Thursday in an Army report: 39 have died in U.S. custody, and 94 others are abuse victims, either proved or suspected.

Recently, the State Department withheld release of a report outlining its good works in 101 countries, waiting until the tempest over Abu Ghraib eased.

Secretary of State Colin Powell's highest profile rights initiative nowadays is to ease the suffering in Darfur. He is demanding that Sudanese authorities increase humanitarian access to victims there and rein in militias responsible for the suffering.

Democratic candidate John Kerry has indicated he may be less assertive on certain aspects of human rights policy than Bush. For example, he told The Washington Post in May that pursuing nonproliferation goals in Russia and Pakistan is more important than protecting human rights, and that China's integration into the world economy transcends rights concerns.

Amnesty International USA leveled that charge when the State Department released its annual human rights report in February. It argued that too many countries feel too little U.S. pressure to end abuses.

In a raft, on skis or falling out of the sky, Stripes readers like to get around.

Read their travel tales and tips on Thursdays in Travel.

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Clinton to open Democratic convention

BY DARLENE SUPERVILLE

The Associated Press

BOSTON — Bill Clinton gets an opening night moment in the spotlight but it's John Kerry who has the lead role, even in his absence, as Democrats open their convention intent on putting the Massachusetts senator in the White House.

"Our objective is to show the personal side of Senator Kerry — his character, his Vietnam service, his leadership qualities," New Mexico Gov. Bill Richardson, the fourth day convention's chairman, said Monday.

As Kerry campaigned in Florida, convention delegates readied for an evening of speeches focused on his stated vision for America: a strong economy, a growing middle class, affordable health care and a beefed-up military.

"The reality is that the American people don't focus on who they are going to vote for entirely until the conventions period," Richardson said of CNN's "American Morning" program. "What you want to do is draw them in with a message of what

we're going to do."

Clinton, the Democrats' last occupant of the White House, dismissed any idea he might overshadow Kerry.

"I feel good about the way he relates to voters," Clinton said Sunday. As for himself, "I'm going to give a talk and get out of town."

Kerry was visiting the Kennedy Space Center in the key state of Florida on Monday to talk about affordable health care. He popped into Boston for a brief surprise appearance Sunday night at the Yankees-Red Sox game, throwing out the first

pitch.

"It's great to be back in Boston for a game like this," Kerry said after the Red Sox won, 9-6. He will make a grand entrance at the convention Wednesday, the

day before he accepts the party's presidential nomination.

Clinton's wife, Sen. Hillary Rodham Clinton, was to introduce the former president, after speeches from Richardson, former President Carter and Al Gore, who lost to President Bush in 2000 after a drawn-out ballot recount in Florida.

Kerry said a team of lawyers is looking at voting problems to try to prevent a repeat of that dispute.

But security was the immediate worry. This year's convention is the first since the terrorist attacks of Sept. 11, 2001, and police and military authorities already had revved up.

Camouflaged military police kept watch on elevated rail lines overlooking the FleetCenter, the sports arena where 4,350 delegates will gather through Thursday. Helicopters circled overhead constantly.

Bomb-sniffing dogs and officers with guns patrolled nearby streets. Metal barricades about 7 feet high directed foot traffic and limited access to the FleetCenter. Numerous roads will be closed during the con-

vention, and authorities braced for gridlock Monday as commuters seek alternate routes to and from work.

But despite the precautions and the terrorism threat, the convention's message was relentlessly upbeat, underscoring the unity behind Kerry as the man Democrats hope will deny Bush a second term.

Protests remained mostly scattered. Two groups — about 3,000 protesting mainly against the Iraq war and about 1,000 abortion opponents — exchanged angry words blocks from the FleetCenter on Sunday. A few anti-abortion protesters lay in fetal positions in the street as fellow protesters drew chalk outlines around them.

Police moved them along, but two people were taken into custody.

Among the rallies, parties and receptions planned Monday was one featuring documentary filmmaker Michael Moore, whose Bush-bashing "Fahrenheit 9/11" movie just passed the \$100 million mark, the first documentary ever to top that milestone at the domestic box office.

In keeping with tradition, Bush is spending the next several days out of the public eye at his ranch in Crawford, Texas.

Republicans working 'behind enemy lines'

BY WILL LESTER

The Associated Press

BOSTON — Republican Gov. Mitt Romney is already a fish out of water in Massachusetts, its Democratic senators, congressmen and state lawmakers dominating politics. Now party members from around the country are in Boston for their nominating convention.

"People were asking me last night what it's like having so many Democrats in town," Romney told NBC's "Today" on Monday, "and I said I don't notice any difference. We have that every single day."

Romney has more like-minded company than usual as the Democratic National Convention begins. These Republicans can be found in a nondescript, red-brick building near the convention site, scouring the Internet, monitoring convention coverage and fielding media calls.

They don't give out the address of their makeshift war room, and they don't advertise their presence in Boston.

"We're behind enemy lines and we're well aware of that fact," said Republican National Committee Chairman Ed Gillespie. "But we can't allow baseless charges to go uncorrected."

Republicans were holding the first of their daily news conferences from the GOP war room Monday with Colorado Gov. Bill Owens, Rep. Henry Bonilla and Massachusetts Lt. Gov. Kerry Healey.

Other prominent Republicans will follow during the week.

The war room is on two floors of the building a couple of blocks from the FleetCenter, the downtown arena where the Democrats are holding their nominating convention.

Researchers from the RNC are searching computer screens that line all four walls in the research

room that is the nerve center of the war room. They are looking for online reports about the Democratic ticket of John Kerry and John Edwards.

Televisions are tuned to news stations covering the convention.

The researchers fire out e-mails to respond quickly to any Democratic claim they feel they must counter.

On the walls, the Democratic senators are listed along with the National Journal's rating of their voting records. Kerry's is the most liberal; Edwards is No. 4.

A Boston Herald front page pictures Kerry and Edwards with the headline: "They're left of left!" GOP. Dem team more liberal than Kennedy."

The Kerry campaign scoffs at such labels, saying he's a fiscal conservative with a moderate view on many issues.

The GOP war room is freshly painted and sports blue carpeting, but the offices are labeled with scraps of paper taped to the glass.

The room marked "Spinners" is where GOP strategists such as Mary Matalin and Rich Galen will give interviews and provide their interpretation of events during the Democrats' big week.

"The entire week will be an exercise in giving John Kerry's voting record a makeover," said Christine Iverson, a RNC spokeswoman. Republicans will try to counter those efforts.

"We understand we're swimming upstream," Gillespie said. The GOP war room in Boston is similar to the Bush campaign's war room in Arlington, Va. Both are modeled after Bill Clinton's campaign war room in 1992, designed to respond rapidly to all opposition charges. The Boston location offers advantages.

"It's the best peg we could have had," said Scott Hanson, director of radio press for the RNC. "If we were doing this out of Washington, it would be lame."

Lend me your ear



Democratic presidential candidate Sen. John Kerry chats with Army National Guard Sp. Will Pumyea of Woburn, Mass., after Kerry threw the first pitch to Pumyea at the game between the Red Sox and the Yankees in Boston on Sunday. Kerry was supposed to fly from Ohio to Florida for a campaign stop, but he announced to journalists on the plane after takeoff that they were going to Boston instead.

'Wife speaks her mind'

BOSTON — Democratic presidential candidate John Kerry doesn't have a problem with his wife telling an insistent journalist to "shove it" when urged to explain her plea for more civility in politics. Neither does Sen. Hillary Rodham Clinton.

"I think my wife speaks her mind appropriately," Kerry told reporters Monday when asked about the exchange between his wife, Teresa Heinz Kerry, and the editorial page editor of conservative Pittsburgh Tribune-Review.

Asked about the response on CNN's "American Morning," Clinton said Monday. "A lot of Americans are going to say, 'Good for you, you go, girl,' and that's certainly how I feel about it."

Vice President Dick Cheney recently came under criticism for using a four-letter obscenity in an exchange with Sen. Patrick Leahy, D-Vt., on the Senate floor. He later was unapologetic about the remark, saying, "I felt better after I said it."

AFN's election coverage

FRANKFURT — Television and radio coverage of the Democratic National Convention began early Tuesday morning for American Forces Network viewers and listeners living in Europe and the Middle East.

Through early Friday morning, AFN-News will provide comprehensive TV coverage, showing three hours each day beginning at 2 a.m. (CET), said Ann Mulligan, the director of broadcasting

in Europe for AFN. The convention, which is being held in Boston, started Monday and ends Thursday in the United States.

Television coverage in Europe will last for three hours, or until 5 a.m. (CET). The nightly feed will feature convention coverage provided by the Public Broadcasting Service (PBS), Mulligan said.

AFN-Atlantic will offer network convention wrap-up reports at 6 a.m. (ABC) and noon (CBS) on Tuesday, Thursday and Friday. Unless something changes, there will be no wrap-up report on Wednesday, Mulligan said.

Power Network Radio also will provide coverage, starting at 2 a.m. (CET).

On the last day of the convention — Sen. John Kerry, D-Mass., is expected to formally accept his party's nomination for president.

From staff and news reports



Patrick Holland, sitting in his home in Sandown, N.H., in April, has achieved his quest to "divorce" his father, who killed Patrick's mother.

Father grants son's request for 'divorce'

By KATHARINE WEBSTER

The Associated Press

CANTON, Mass. — A teenage boy won a landmark legal battle Monday by getting a "divorce" from his father, who murdered the boy's mother six years ago while the child slept in the next room.

Daniel Holland signed a settlement agreeing to give up his parental rights and waiving any right to be part of his son Patrick's life. He had been scheduled to face a closed-door trial Monday that experts said could have been precedent-setting.

Patrick, 14, was one of the first children to independently initiate a "divorce" from a parent, despite the fact that he had a permanent home with his legal guardians.

Patrick said he was relieved the case was over, but was skeptical of his father's motives.

"I don't think he did it for me; I just think he did it to make himself look good, to make himself look rehabilitated. But either way, I'm glad he did it," he said. "It's like a big weight's been lifted off my shoulders, knowing that I don't have to worry about him being in my life."

Howard Davidson, director of the American Bar Association's Center on Children and the Law, said the lack of a trial means no legal precedent was set for other children in homes where one parent murders the other. But he said the case stood out because of Patrick's strong advocacy for himself in the courts and media, possibly emboldening other children to seek parental divorces.

"It might inspire other kids who feel the courts aren't listening to them to consider involvement in that process," he said. "Patrick deserves a lot of credit. It wasn't an easy thing for him to do."

Holland, 39, is serving life in prison without parole for first-degree murder. Prosecutors said he shot Liz Holland eight times at her Quincy home, then beat her in the head with the rifle.

He is appealing the conviction.

Patrick's legal guardians, Ron and Rita Lazisky of Sandown, N.H., said they would file immediately to adopt Patrick. Rita Lazisky was Liz Holland's best friend.

Holland participated Monday by video hookup from prison. As the brief hearing drew to a close, his lawyer, Patricia Gorman, said Holland wanted to speak to Patrick and tell him he loved him, said Ron Lazisky. Patrick walked out before the judge could rule, and the judge eventually denied the request.

The Laziskys and grandparents on both sides sought custody of Patrick after the murder.

The Laziskys eventually got custody in a settlement with Daniel Holland's parents, but they agreed not to try to adopt Patrick until 2005, when Patrick would be old enough to have a major say.

Because there was no adoption, Holland's parental rights were never terminated.

That was fine with Patrick and the Laziskys until Holland began trying to get Patrick's school and counseling records. They responded by suing to try to terminate his parental rights.

AIDS fears decline; threat to children still a concern

By WILL LESTER

The Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Fewer people believe the overall threat of AIDS is very serious these days, but a majority of Americans say they worry about the impact of the sexually transmitted disease on the nation's children, an Associated Press poll found.

That decline in fears about AIDS comes as the disease is showing signs of making a comeback in the United States. A year ago, AIDS diagnoses increased for the first time in a decade.

About six in 10 said they feel AIDS is a "very serious" problem, according to the poll. When people were asked in 1987 how serious AIDS was as a national health problem, almost nine in 10 said it was "very serious."

Revolutionary new drugs allow people to live longer with AIDS, and many young gay men have no memories of the devastating early days of the sexually transmitted disease two decades ago.

Two in 10 polled said they were concerned they would personally be infected with HIV, but 51 percent said they were worried a son or daughter could be infected.

More than six in 10 of those with children said they were concerned that a child might be affected. Four in 10 of those with no children acknowledged fears about the possibility of a child being infected, if they had one.

Fifty-five percent of those polled said teaching safe sex should be the focus of efforts to prevent AIDS. Forty percent favored promoting abstinence.

Americans say they support the \$15 billion the United States has pledged to help fight AIDS in developing countries overseas. But when asked whether the money should go abroad or be used to fight the epidemic at home, they chose keeping the money here by a 2-1 ratio.

The recent increase in diagnosed cases of AIDS is likely a sign of things to come, said Dr. Jim Curran, dean of the Rollins School of Public Health at Emory University and a longtime veteran of AIDS prevention efforts.

"There are a number of factors that would suggest that AIDS and HIV infections will continue to be on the rise in the United States," Curran said. "There are more people infected than ever, there's a lower death rate, a rise in infection rates among young gay men."

Sea lion study may lift Alaskan fishing limits

By DAN JOLING

The Associated Press

SAND POINT, Alaska — A three-year, \$565,000 study to learn more about the endangered Steller sea lion is under way to discover why their numbers seem to be declining since 1975.

Residents hope there has been an undercount and that the animals haven't declined due to commercial fishing, which provides an economic lifeline here.

Officials with the Aleutians East Borough, which obtained the federal grant funding the study, believe more knowledge of Sturgeon Island sea lions and fish stocks is key to lifting restrictions for fishermen. The restrictions prevent fishermen from transit with in three miles of rookeries unless weather endangers their lives.

Restrictions on sea lion critical habitat sometimes mean no trawling within 20 miles of rookeries. Fishermen carry vessel monitoring devices so the Coast Guard can track their location.

No one knows why the sea lion has declined west of Alaska's Panhandle.

"Bottom-up" hypotheses ask something affected sea lion environment: Fishing or climate change reduced prey; a nonlethal disease reduced sea lion foraging efficiency; pollutants in the food chain reduced their fertility.

A "junk food" theory holds that sea lions for some reason had to switch from eating fatty herring, sand lance and capelin to lowfat cod and pollock.

"Top-down" hypotheses look at factors that kill sea lions independent of the environment's ability to support the population: Predators such as killer whales or sharks switched from eating other prey to sea lions; subsistence hunters killed more than they reported; or pollution or disease directly killed sea lions.

Aleutians East Borough officials contend the sea lion decline is not due to food taken away by local commercial trawlers. In all the studies to date, no one has ever found a skinny sea lion, said Beth Stewart, resource manager for the borough.

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IN THE WORLD

Afghanistan president drops warlord from election ticket

BY STEPHEN GRAHAM

The Associated Press

KABUL, Afghanistan — Afghan President Hamid Karzai dropped a powerful warlord from his electoral ticket after intense political wrangling that prompted NATO peacekeepers to beef up their presence on the streets of the capital.

The U.S.-backed interim leader selected a little-known brother of the late Afghan resistance hero Ahmad Shah Massoud to be his chief running mate in a surprise move sure to test this volatile nation's fragile ethnic and factional balance.

"I hope the Afghan people will recognize us as a good team and I hope the people of Afghanistan will vote for us," Karzai told reporters summoned to a shady courtyard of the presidential palace.

Karzai, beaming under his trademark woolen hat, was flanked by his vice presidential choices for the Oct. 9 vote as well as dozens of aides and security guards. He joked that fixing his



Afghanistan President Hamid Karzai, right, listens to Afghan Defense Minister Gen. Mohammed Fahim in this 2003 file photo. In a surprise move, Karzai dropped Fahim from his ticket for the upcoming election.

team in two days of nonstop talks had been easier than governing.

But he appeared to have lost the support of snubbed Defense Minister Mohammed Fahim, his current first vice president and

arguably the country's most powerful warlord, as well as his foreign and education ministers.

Ahmad Zia Massoud is Afghanistan's current ambassador to Russia and the brother of slain Tajik resistance hero Ahmad Shah Massoud, who was killed by al-Qaida terrorists on Sept. 9, 2001. Karzai, himself a member of the country's main Pashtun group, named Hazara leader Karim Khalili his choice for second vice president.

That lineup is likely to appeal across the country's deep ethnic divides. It will also help Karzai shake off a reputation for using kid gloves with the warlords who dominate much of the country.

Fahim has failed to deliver on a promise to disarm thousands of militiamen in time for the elections. Thousands of his soldiers remain in the capital, and NATO troops who patrol the city took no chance Monday on potential trouble.

Karzai promised to present his "plan for the future" to long-suffering Afghans in the coming days.



NATO Secretary-General Jaap de Hoop Scheffer, right, listens to European Union foreign policy chief Javier Solana on Monday during a new conference at NATO headquarters in Brussels, Belgium.

NATO to provide extra forces for security at Olympic Games

The Associated Press

BRUSSELS, Belgium — NATO has agreed to provide extra forces under alliance command to help Greece protect next month's Olympic Games from potential terror attacks, officials said Monday.

However, unspecified "operational issues" remain to be resolved, NATO officials said on condition of anonymity. The officials said the Greek request for additional counterterrorism assistance, first considered Thursday, had been approved "in essence."

A U.S. official in Washington told The Associated Press last

week that the United States had committed 400 special forces soldiers, but was still discussing with the Greek government where they would be based.

Greek media reported Greece has requested two teams from NATO, an anti-terrorist squad and another for evacuating buildings in case of disaster.

NATO, which is already providing air and sea patrols and a special biochemical weapons unit, had been expected to authorize the Greek request for an additional rapid reaction unit, which would most likely be led by U.S. personnel and based in Germany.

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Marie Leblanc, who confessed to making up a story about being the victim of an anti-Semitic attack in a suburban Paris train earlier this month, arrives Monday with her lawyer Christophe Deltombe at the courthouse in Cergy-Pontoise, France, to face criminal charges.

French woman convicted for lie about anti-Semitic train attack

By PIERRE-ANTOINE SOUCHARD

The Associated Press

PONTOISE, France — A young French woman who admitted to lying about being the victim of an anti-Semitic attack was convicted Monday for fabricating a story that stunned France.

Marie Leblanc, 22, was handed

a four-month suspended sentence, ordered to receive counseling and put under probation for two years at the trial in Pontoise, north of Paris.

Defense lawyers and her mother have described Leblanc as psychologically fragile and deeply sorry for her lie, which created an uproar in France as the government is trying to combat a rise in anti-Semitic and other hate crimes.

Leblanc claimed she was robbed on a suburban Paris train earlier this month by a

knife-wielding gang that mistook her for a Jew and scrawled swastikas on her body.

But police found no clues or witnesses. After learning Leblanc had a history of lying and filing complaints about assaults that were never proved, she was detained for questioning.

In a search of her home in the suburb of Aubervilliers, police found the marker she had used to draw swastikas on her body and other evidence. Leblanc subsequently went on national TV to issue a public apology.

EXCHANGE RATES

Military rates	
Euro	\$1.2475
British pound	\$1.89
Japanese yen (July 26)	\$107.00
S. Korean won (July 27)	\$132.50
Commercial rates	
Bahrain (Dinar)	0.377
British pound	\$1.838
Canada (Dollar)	1.186
Denmark (Krone)	6.1392
Egypt (Pound)	4.82
Euro	\$1.2153
Hong Kong (Dollar)	7.803
Hungary (Forint)	205.89
Indonesia (Rupiah)	174.5
Israel (Shekel)	4.4964
Japan (Yen)	109.67
Kuwait (Dinar)	0.2947
Norway (Krone)	0.9119
Philippines (Peso)	55.39
Saudi Arabia (Riyal)	3.75
Singapore (Dollar)	1.747
S. Korea (Won)	1,166.45
Switzerland (Franc)	1.265
Thailand (Baht)	1.07
Turkey (Lira)	1,470,585.00

(Military exchange rates are those available to customers at military banking facilities in the country of issuance for non-U.S. citizens. Commercial rates are those available to customers at commercial banks in the country of issuance for non-U.S. citizens. U.S. dollars are represented in dollars to the pound, and the euro, which is dollars to the euro.)

PRECIOUS METALS

London close	
Gold	\$389.25
Silver	\$16.18

INTEREST RATES

Prime rate	4.25
Discount rate	2.25
Federal funds market rate	1.25
3-month bill	1.57
30-year Treasury	5.13

Sources: The Associated Press, Bank of America, Bloomberg.com

Cents and Sensibility Money tip of the day

E-learning opportunities

CBS MarketWatch

NEW YORK — If you're eager to get ahead in your field but don't have time to commute to weekly courses at your local college, consider classes online.

Internet-based courses, tutorials and programs are an easy way to study — whether you're an entrepreneur looking to learn new skills for your business, a college or high school student hoping to earn extra credits or a busy professional earning a degree while holding a full-time job. E-learning also offers a good opportunity to explore a new field if you're considering changing jobs.

Taking courses online lets you learn at your own pace and study from your home or office. You can choose courses on a wide variety of subjects.

Because you aren't physically on campus, you also may pay

less money per credit than for most college courses.

But be sure to check the credibility and credentials of programs before signing up. Not every advertised online learning opportunity is a sound one; scam artists have been known to lure victims with promises of quick degrees for little or no work.

To find e-learning opportunities, check major online universities such as the University of Phoenix at www.phoenix.edu, the University of Maryland University College at www.umuc.edu, the University of Colorado-Denver at www.ucdenver.edu or Walden University at www.waldenu.edu.

You also might examine course offerings at area colleges, or any college with a degree program that interests you. Most universities offer at least a handful of online courses, especially during the summer or during semester breaks.

Macedonia debates law to give ethnic Albanians local say

By KONSTANTIN TESTORIDES
The Associated Press

SKOPJE, Macedonia — Macedonia's parliament convened amid heavy security Monday to debate a contentious draft law that would give ethnic Albanians control of 16 municipalities in the tense Balkan state.

The draft, which needs the assembly's approval to become law, has sparked riots by ethnic Macedonians claiming it would split the country along ethnic lines.

Police sealed off downtown Skopje, erecting metal fences and closing the streets surrounding the parliament building. Security on main roads leading into the capital was also heightened, with police manning checkpoints.

The draft decentralization law, approved by Macedonia's multi-ethnic government this month, paves the way for ethnic Albanian self-rule in the 16 municipalities where they constitute a majority.

Under the redistricting, Macedonia is to have 80 municipalities.

Ethnic Albanians, who comprise about a quarter of the country's 2 million people, live mostly in the northwestern region.

The decentralization plan is in line with a key point in the Western-brokered peace deal that ended six months of fighting between ethnic Albanian rebels and Macedonian government troops in 2001. The insurgency was

launched by ethnic Albanian rebels seeking more rights for their minority.

Under the peace deal, rebels handed over weapons to NATO while Macedonia's parliament changed the constitution to upgrade ethnic Albanian rights.

The plan was welcomed by Macedonia's ethnic Albanians and Western EU representatives.

But opposition ethnic Macedonian hard-liners and nationalists contend the plan divides the country along ethnic lines.

Macedonia's nationalist opposition announced it would stage "peaceful and dignified" protests later Monday in Skopje, under the motto: "All of Macedonia for a whole Macedonia."

As parliament convened, Alexander Gostakovski, the minister in charge of local government, appealed to lawmakers to respect the sensitivities of European products and proposed parliament speedily adopt the legislation.

"Decentralization is essential for Macedonia's path toward democracy," Gostakovski said. "It is also vital for building trust between us."

Trying to stall the decision, opposition lawmakers began filibustering Monday, raising the possibility that debate would drag on for days.

Analysts is expected to call local elections in the 80 municipalities in early August.

Sudan sanctions pushed

BRUSSELS, Belgium — The European Union on Monday joined the United States in pushing for U.N. sanctions against Sudan if the country does not move to end the conflict in its western Darfur region.

German Foreign Minister Joschka Fischer demanded Sudan implement a July 3 promise to U.N. Secretary General Kofi Annan to rein in pro-government Arab militias, improve security and provide better access for relief efforts.

The violence in Darfur began 15 months ago when two rebel groups from Darfur's African tribes took up arms in a struggle over land and resources. Arab militias known as Janjaweed then began a brutal campaign to drive out the black Africans.

EU backs off label

BRUSSELS, Belgium — A controversial proposal to replace national origin labels with "made in the European Union" was dropped Monday after the EU's head office reported little interest in the idea.

"There does not seem to be sufficient support for the introduction of a compulsory marking scheme for EU products," the Eu-

ropean Commission said in an internal report.

The Italian government had proposed a "Made in the EU" label last year, arguing it would help distinguish European products from imports and contribute to eliminating counterfeiting.

But it faced strong opposition from countries such as Germany, the Netherlands and Britain, which argued national labels were more meaningful and switching to new ones would be costly and burdensome.

Any other Pimbury?

LONDON — Calling all Pimburies! Any Pimbury.

Mike Pimbury, 73, of London, fears he is the only person in the world with the surname. He'd love to be proved wrong, he said Monday.

"If there is anybody who is listening whose name is Pimbury, we would be very pleased to hear from you," Pimbury said in a British Broadcasting Corp. interview.

He said he had researched in Britain, Canada and Australia without finding a Pimbury.

"We have traced the family tree right down to the present day in Britain, Canada and Australia without any family, so I think I am the last," he said.

From wire reports



Quick Trips

The Maginot Line

Schoenenbourg fort provides look into French strategy

BY RUSTY BRYAN

Stars and Stripes

For a project that's the byword for strategic blindness, France's Maginot Line provides some compelling sights. And nowhere is the elaborate engineering feat more impressive than in the artillery fort, or *ouvrage*, of Schoenenbourg, just across the Rhine River in the Alsace region of France, some 50 miles southwest of Heidelberg.

Burrowing for nearly two miles beneath an Alsatian ridge, the Schoenenbourg fort offers glimpses into French strategy in the years between the wars. The high command wanted to apply the lessons of the World War I trench warfare around Verdun — during which French soldiers endured gas attacks, isolation from friendly forces, unremitting shelling, hunger, thirst and hand-to-hand fighting when their ammunition ran out.

A series of forts was built along the border with Germany, with much of it underground. Interconnecting tunnels stretched for miles, linking sites where soldiers slept and trained. The forts were designed not only as housing for these troops but also as a line of defense to slow down an attack by the Germans and give the rest of the country time to mobilize.

The Schoenenbourg part of the Maginot Line — named for André Maginot, a war hero and minister of War from 1928 to 1932 — was built between 1932-35. The self-guided tour begins below the entrance where underground barracks blocks, a kitchen, infirmary and power plant all look almost as if they had just been abandoned.

The rear part of the fort is separated from its six firing blocks by a three-quarter-mile-long tunnel set a safe 98 feet underground. Putting the living



PHOTOS BY RUSTY BRYAN/Stars and Stripes

Nearly two miles of tunnels buried 50 to 98 feet underground connect the six combat blocks of the Maginot Line artillery fort of Schoenenbourg, France, to each other and to logistics, living and command positions some three-quarters of a mile to the rear.

and logistics areas for the fort's 500-man garrison so far to the rear enabled soldiers to rest despite heavy shelling on the front of the position. That way, they could avoid the exhaustion and madness suffered by the defenders of Verdun, who endured months of constant shelling directly overhead.

Large stocks of water, food and ammunition, along with adequate ventilation, anti-gas air scrubbers and secure, blast-proof telephone lines also entered into the improvements at Schoenenbourg.

Along the tracks of the electric rail system that served the fort's tunnels on the way to the firing blocks are officers' quarters, ingeniously designed escape shafts, caches for explosives designed to demolish the tunnel if required, steel blast doors separating the combat blocks from the logistics tunnel and the fort's command-and-control offices, still equipped with vintage typewriters, phones and firing diagrams.

As in all areas of the fort, tri-lingual signs explaining what went on where and how are prominently posted.



Rail cars that once hauled ammunition into the Maginot Line artillery fort of Schoenenbourg stand outside the munitions entrance to the fort, which now receives only visitors.

The two-hour tour requires visitors to climb up and down 137 steps from the ground-level entrance to the tunnel level, and negotiate another 50 stairs each way to examine the gun turret. It's a two-mile walk from beginning to end, and a jacket is a must, even in the summer. The temperature is a damp 54 degrees year-round.

Although the Maginot Line proved a strategic debacle, the artillery fort at Schoenenbourg

was a tactical success. Despite bombardment by shells as large as 420 millimeters, as well as one-ton bombs, the most heavily attacked fort on the entire line was almost undamaged. It was surrendered intact to the Germans by order of the French government on July 1, 1940, one week after the armistice between the two countries was signed.

E-mail Rusty Bryan at: bryanr@mail.estripes.osd.mil.

On the QT



Directions

Schoenenbourg is in the Alsace region of France. If driving, exit Autobahn 5 at Rastatt and head toward Rastatt Zentrum. Turn west at the signs leading to Plittersdorf and the Rhine River bridge. After crossing the river, head west toward Hatten and then Sultz s/s Forests. At Sultz s/s Forests, turn north on D264 to Schoenenbourg. Go through town on N264 toward Wissembourg and turn left atop the next hill at the sign to Ligne Maginot, Fort de Schoenenbourg.



Times

The fort is open daily May through September. The ticket office is open 2-4 p.m. Monday through Saturday, and 9:30-11 a.m. and 2-4 p.m. on Sundays; the fort's doors are at locked daily at 6 p.m. In April and October, the fort is open 2-4 p.m. on Saturdays, Sundays and holidays. Doors again close at 6 p.m.



Costs

Tickets are 5 euros for adults and 3 euros for youth ages 6-18.



Food

Closest to the fort is the Auberge Ligne Maginot, about 200 yards from entrance. It offers a full menu (printed in French and German) and bar, along with terrace seating. Salads cost 6-8 euros, and there's a wide selection of entrees priced from 10-18 euros. Food of all types is available in any of the villages nearby, all of which boast bakeries.



Information

Information, maps and photographs are available in English, German and French at www.lignemaginot.com.

There are guidebooks in English for sale at the fort's ticket booth, along with a free tri-lingual brochure.

— RUSTY BRYAN



PETER JAEGER/Stars and Stripes

STARS AND STRIPES LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

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Brian Brown, Features Sean Moore, Sports

Addresses

U.S. MAIL: Unit 29480, APO 09211
INTERNET: MAIL: Postfach 1330, 60435 Griesheim, Germany
FAC: 030-84-8419; fax: (+49) (0) 6155-601416
E-MAIL: letters@mail.stripes.com
Letters: letters@mail.stripes.com
2004-10-01, Phone: 030-84-8420 or (+49) (0) 6155-601416
EDITORIAL DIRECTOR: David Mazzarella, 250 14th St. NW, Suite 350, Washington, DC 20045-1201, Phone: 030-84-8420 or (+49) (0) 6155-601416
E-MAIL: mazzarella@stripes.com
ONLINE: News: U.S. News & World News correspondence to: Onbushman, Stars and Stripes, 250 14th St. NW, Suite 350, Washington, DC 20045-1201, Phone: 030-84-8420 or (+49) (0) 6155-601416
or e-mail: mazzarella@stripes.com

How to call us

Editor: 030-84-8420; fax: (+49) (0) 6155-601416
Letters: 030-84-8400; fax: (+49) (0) 6155-601416
Circulation: 030-84-8437; fax: (+49) (0) 6155-601437
Advertising: 030-84-8433; fax: (+49) (0) 6155-60133443

Germany Bureau (49)

Bamberg: Rick Emmert, 27988 BSB, Box 25341, APO 09139-2535; fax: 030-84-7657 or (+9) 951/9886; fax: 049-3807 or (+9) 951/2086-0000
E-mail: emmert@mail.stripes.com
Bamberg: Perry Dyer, 250 14th St. NW, APO 09034, Box 458-4088, or (+9) 958-7007-0000
E-mail: dyer@mail.stripes.com
Darmstadt: David Mazzarella, Unit 29480, APO 09211, Box 349-5406 or (+9) 6155-601406
E-mail: mazzarella@mail.stripes.com
New Sanderson, Unit 29480, APO 09211, Box 349-5406 or (+9) 6155-601406
E-mail: mazzarella@mail.stripes.com
New Sanderson, Unit 29480, APO 09211, Box 349-5406 or (+9) 6155-601406
E-mail: mazzarella@mail.stripes.com
Heidelberg: Heinrich, Rick Sawatzki and Jon R. Anderson, Room 11, 91041 Heidelberg, Germany, Phone: 030-710-7010 or (+9) 6221-654, fax: (+9) 6221-654
E-mail: heinrich@mail.stripes.com
Kaiserslautern: Spangemann, Maria McCreath, APO 09227-3717, Box 458-4088, or (+9) 631-5716
E-mail: spangemann@mail.stripes.com
Stuttgart: Steve Luehr, APO 09211, Box 4931-467-7001, or (+9) 631-5716
E-mail: luehr@mail.stripes.com

ITALY

Anzio/Vicenza: Kurt Hents, APO 0310 632-7652, or (+9) 039 458-7652, second line 0310 632-4222 or (+9) 039 458-4222
E-mail: hents@mail.stripes.com
Brescia: Kendra Helmer and Jason Chubb, PSC 810, Box 95, APO 09619, Box 626-5158 (Helmer), Box 626-5153 (Chubb) or (+9) 391 (081) 568-5158 (Helmer), fax: (+9) 391 (081) 568-5153 (Chubb) or (+9) 391 (081) 568-5158 (Helmer)
E-mail: helmer@mail.stripes.com

SPAIN

Rece: Scott Schramm, PSC 810, Box 95, APO 09615, Box 727-1099 or (+9) 34-91-2099, fax: 727-1034 or (+9) 34-91-2096-1034
E-mail: schramm@mail.stripes.com

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E-mail: simpson@mail.stripes.com

WASHINGTON D.C.

Bureau editor: Patrick Kelsch, 250 14th St. NW, Suite 350, Washington, DC 20045-1201, tel: (+1) (202) 761-0859, e-mail: pkeltsch@stripes.com
Sandra Jantz, Lisa Suggs, 250 14th St. NW, Suite 350, Washington, DC 20045-1201, tel: (+1) (202) 761-4752, fax: (+1) (202) 692-6386
E-mail: jantz@stripes.com

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Great time in Qatar

In the last couple of months here in Iraq, learning experiences were constant as each passing day went by. There is a wide variety of personalities from all over the world here with each person having a different way of adapting to a combat zone.

Personally, I feel that my faith and family play the biggest role of support in guiding me through the journey of life. I believe that everything happens for a reason and my path is already paved. Every experience should result in the reflection of perspectives, career observations and, of course, should always be taken for what it's worth. I am proud to be here in Iraq and will continue to grow through all experiences that come my way.

Challenges come along, inevitably; how you respond to them determines who you are and everything you're going to be.

Just recently, we went on the Rest and Recuperation Pass Program to Qatar and had an excellent time.

Every day, you could find me at the pool for hours at a time. Right next to the pool was there a Chili's restaurant. It was so nice to get away from everything and just relax.

I went on one of the trips that included taking a boat out into the ocean where they had different water sports. People were fishing, getting pulled on an inner-tube being tacked to a speed boat, water skiing, jet skiing, jumping off the top of the boat, swimming to the island, and they even had a banana boat.

Floating around in the ocean, swimming, and especially riding on the Ski-Doo were the highlights of my day. I had an awesome time on the Ski-Doo and I didn't want to get off it. It was awesome! I hadn't laughed like that for a long time.

It was beautiful seeing everyone enjoying themselves and obviously so happy as we walked the outskirts of the island.

I am very appreciative to have gone to Qatar and would love to go there again. Soldiers are working hard to fulfill our mission here and this is a great idea for morale.

This is a trip that I will never forget and the pictures I took are definitely worth a thousand words. A big "hooah!" to the entire command for making this possible.

Sp. Angelina Wiger

Baquba, Iraq

Cover troops, not enemy

My fellow soldiers and I are outraged.

It seems in the past few months we are continuously seeing pictures of Iraqis carrying rocket-propelled grenades and wearing the uniforms of local anti-American groups. As soldiers fighting these people, we honestly could do without seeing this in the pages of Stars and Stripes. The reasoning behind this is simple: Hostiles with RPGs are to be dealt with immediately.

I don't understand how a reporter could get this close to the enemy and want to pick up a camera instead of an M-16. We try so hard to distinguish the difference between the enemy and civilians on a daily

Tell us what you think

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basis and to see someone get this close to the enemy is just not what we would like to see in the paper.

While we appreciate what the reporters of Stars and Stripes are doing, we would like to see more of what we are doing, such as destroying ordnance, erecting barriers and participating in local events.

Sp. Jason P. Shaw

Camp Victory North, Iraq

Critics need a reality check

Everywhere you turn people are jumping on the president about casualties and death in Afghanistan and Iraq. I wish not a single servicemember would be injured or killed, but that is not reality. Freedom has a price.

I have read how weapons of mass destruction are being given up by Libya and how other countries are admitting what they have been hiding. This is just one more reason that justifies our presence there, as the rest of the world will be a safer and better place.

I was in the first Gulf War and I returned from Iraq this time on May 18, 2003. Of all the people who are complaining, how many have worn their country's uniform? How many have been in Iraq to see firsthand what has been happening? How many of them did not vote in the last presidential election?

If you didn't vote, then shut your mouth — you had a chance to make a difference but couldn't be bothered. No decision is a decision and not voting gives the candidate you want one less vote than his or her opponent.

Our men and women of the armed forces deserve our support. Just review history and see where this country would be without them. I believe our national language would be either German or Japanese.

I always have to wonder how people can complain when they should be thankful. This is still the best place in the world to live. America has its problems, but we still have the greatest amount of freedom of any country on this planet.

Instead of complaining, (those critical of the war should) learn to do something posi-

tive. When is the last time [a critic] volunteered to help the less fortunate? When is the last time [a critic] said thanks for all that he or she has?

It is easy to always want more and complain about what others have. I am happy to be alive. I have a loving wife and a healthy, happy 3-year-old daughter. I have a job and I am fairly good health. There are many things I do not have, and I could care less — as I have what is important.

A.R. Nichols

Camp Kinser, Okinawa

Special ops soldiers first

I am a team sergeant with civil affairs currently operating in Iraq. In the article "Assignment: Normalcy in Iraq" (July 14), the writer stated incorrectly that "All civil affairs soldiers are reservists and excluded from combat operations."

This is not true. The Army has one active-duty civil affairs battalion, the 96th Civil Affairs Battalion (Assault). All civil affairs soldiers are assigned to U.S. Army Civil Affairs and Psychological Operations Command-Airborne, headquartered at Fort Bragg, N.C. We are one of the commands that fall under the Special Operations Command, which also includes Special Forces, Rangers, 160th Special Operations Aviation Regiment (Airborne), and JFK Special Warfare Center and School.

As civil affairs soldiers, not all of our work is done in the "rear" or after the rounds stop flying. While we are mostly known for things such as building schools and repairing damage, we are also involved with combat units (infantry, Special Forces, Cavalry, etc.) and are responsible for things like developing primary target lines, minimizing civilian interference with U.S. military operations, conducting hasty assessments, handling civilian dead and supplementing intelligence at operational/tactical level, to name just a few.

Although most in our ranks are reservists, we are special operations soldiers first, civil affairs specialists second.

Sgt. Scott Carter

Najaf Province, Iraq

Don't blame Clinton

The writer of "Bush followed ground rules" (July 12) wrote these 10 trouble-some words: President Clinton sent us into Kosovo, Somalia, Haiti and Rwanda.

"The whole Somalia invasion was not perpetrated by Clinton. It was a going-away present from former President George Bush. A last 'hurray,' if you will."

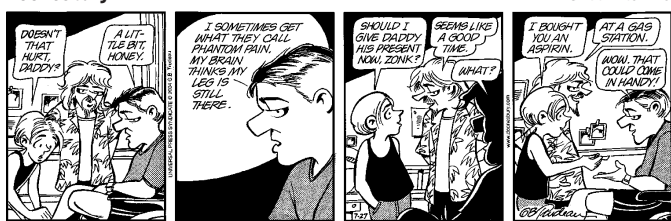
Clinton inherited all of these military campaigns from the lastesture performance of those who came before him in the previous 12 years. Kosovo, Somalia, Haiti and Rwanda could have been nipped in the bud if Clinton had preceded his predecessor. He did not have to be so arrogant to the needs of the rest of the world. But I guess there isn't any man in that.

Justin Espinoza

Landstuhl, Germany

BY GARRY TRUDEAU

Doonesbury



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OMBUDSMAN

Iraq coverage not tripped up by the wires

This is the second in a series of columns on the coverage by Stars and Stripes of the conditions in Iraq since April 2004, which was the aftermath of the fall of Baghdad.

The first one, headlined "Discovering whether Stripes stories cover all bases," appeared in the June 28 edition.

Shortly after I began reviewing the coverage of Iraq by the three editions of Stripes (European, Mideast and Pacific), a Stripes reader serving in the U.S. Army in Europe sent this e-mail to the ombudsman:

"Do you think the media in general adequately covers the support we provide in the reconstruction of Iraq? The perception by some is that the media is biased against the war and is always looking for fire under the smoking gun."

I responded that I was doing this study and would try to answer, referring to Stripes and a group of papers that I was using as a comparison. These included national newspapers, a statewide paper and a 12,000-circulation hometown newspaper.

Stripes is designed to be a "hometown" newspaper for military personnel serving overseas. Its role is to cover "local news" — information of special interest to military personnel no matter where they are serving.

This local news is complemented by the news reports of The Associated Press and supplemental wire services such as the Washington Post/Los Angeles Times to create a complete newspaper. This column looks at the wire service coverage. The next column will look at how Stripes has performed its role of covering "local military news."

The e-mail writer raises a valid question and one with which the ombudsman has been concerned for more than a decade. In July 2003 the Pew Institute, which is a nonprofit foundation with great interest in improving the quality of journalism, did a major study on newspaper credibility. Their report stated that for 15 years readers and viewers have been telling us we have a problem. Two-thirds think we don't report all sides of a story fairly. Fifty-eight percent believe we frequently or occasionally make up stories. Fifty-six percent judge us as often inaccurate.

The profession's journalism societies have focused on too many unnamed sources, opinion in news stories, failure to label a reporter's opinion as "analysis," lack of follow-up and failure to correct errors completely and promptly. These are reasons for people's mistrust of journalism.

What did I find?

■ The national papers published too many stories with too many unnamed sources. The Associated Press, which provides most of Stripes' national and international news, sent a much smaller number of stories with unnamed sources.

Unnamed sources, I believe, constitute the key element in the loss of credibility for newspapers. They take away from the reader the ability to make his or her own judgment on the validity of what he/she is reading.

Unnamed sources and opinion in news stories, as well as news stories not properly labeled as analysis, were not a significant issue in Stripes. The wire copy that was chosen and how it was edited met proper journalistic standards. Only six AP stories that were published in Stripes contained unnamed sources.

I can't say the same for several of the newspapers I read as a comparison. The most egregious unreported AP story I saw

did not appear in Stripes. It quoted a U.S. military official in Baghdad as saying the insurgency in Iraq is led by well-armed Sunnis angry about losing power, not foreign fighters, and is far larger than previously thought.

The unnamed source provided no supporting information or how he/she came to that opinion. And the readers had to make a judgment without knowing whose opinion it was. The article also needed an "analysis" label.

■ The opinion of journalists creeps into too many stories. The opinion should be edited out or the story needs to be labeled "analysis." I found five stories in Stripes where the "analysis" label should have been used and wasn't. In two of the cases, the "analysis" label was added in a later edition.

Overall the AP versions used by Stripes were well-done or well-edited by Stripes or a combination of both. But that was not the case with a number of stories that included opinion or were not labeled as a column or "analysis" that I saw in U.S. newspapers.

■ Coverage has become event-driven. The impact of competing 24-hour cable news networks is that more information is provided sooner, but less perspective and less reliability as to the detail and importance is seen because of the rush to get on the air and/or the use of unnamed sources.

■ Another problem is the lack of follow-up stories. There are far fewer follow-ups and fewer stories that are about positive actions and/or progress being made. This was clearly observed in the wire service coverage of Iraq. I don't think this is because of bias. It is more the result, I think, of not enough staff resources to cover "the events" of the day and do follow-up, in-depth stories.

One example of this was a story by Christopher Torchia of The Associated Press in Stripes' Europe and Mideast editions on May 18 (it appeared in the Pacific editions on May 19) that reported:

"BAGHDAD — A roadside bomb containing deadly sarin nerve agent exploded near a U.S. military convoy, the U.S. military said Monday. It was apparently a leftover from Saddam Hussein's arsenal, but it was uncertain if more such weapons were in the hands of insurgents." (Note: The second sentence in the version that appeared in the Europe and Mideast editions read: "It was believed to be the first confirmed discovery of any of the banned weapons that the United States cited in making its case for the Iraq war.")

The defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld said the results were from a field test, which can be imperfect, and more analysis needed to be done... Rumsfeld said it may take some time to determine precisely what the chemical was. (Note: This paragraph did not appear in the Europe and Mideast editions, which have earlier de-



TERRY BOYD/Stars and Stripes

From left, Spc. Keith Haynie, Sgt. Aaron Bibb, Spc. Kyle Clayton, Sgt. Billy Burrus and Spc. Owen Starlin of the 1st Cavalry Division took part in capturing a weapons cache in May outside Baghdad. Stripes reporter Terry Boyd wrote about it, but the information didn't appear in many other newspapers.

lines than the Pacific edition.)

"Two former weapons inspectors — Hans Blix and David Kay — said the shell was likely a stray weapon that had been scavenged by militants and did not signify that Iraq had large stockpiles of such weapons."

"The Iraq Survey Group confirmed today that a 155 mm artillery round containing sarin nerve agent had been found, (Gen. Mark) Kimmitt said. The round had been rigged as an IED (improvised explosive device) which was discovered by a U.S. force convoy."

On May 20, Stripes published this story by Terry Boyd, one of its reporters, in the Europe and Mideast editions:

"CAMP BLACK JACK, Iraq — Any way you look at it, it was a big score. "First Cavalry Division officials are analyzing the shells, trying to determine if they're conventional 155 mm artillery shells or if they contain other substances including sarin nerve gas or phosphorus, said Maj. Derik von Recum, spokesman for the 1st Cav's 2nd Brigade."

"On Saturday, a roadside bomb using a 155 mm shell filled with sarin exploded in Baghdad. It is unclear whether the bomb is connected to this weapons cache."

The AP story appeared on inside pages with modest headlines in a number of U.S. newspapers. I did not see the information in the May 20 Stripes story in any paper I read. And nearly two months later, I have seen no follow-up by either The AP or Stripes.

In my opinion, the stories call for a follow-up. And I believe that a story on what the Iraqi Survey Group has been doing is long overdue.

Another example: The bombing of the oil pipelines in Iraq receive substantial cov-

erage — and my notes show this happened at least three times. The stories always included "dire warnings" about what it was doing to Iraq oil production. Three or four days later there would be a story of the damages being fixed and oil flowing — but little detail on how it was repaired so quickly or what efforts were being taken to protect the pipelines.

As far as positive news is concerned, the most positive AP story I saw in Stripes was on June 30 in the Europe and Mideast editions with a headline "Iraq talk radio callers welcome, encourage incoming government." And I certainly don't feel that there was very much information in any of the papers I read in the last three months of a positive nature on the reconstruction of Iraq.

My response to the reader who sent the e-mail: You should make your judgment on the press, not in general, but in the newspaper or newspapers you read. The credibility line divides, in my opinion, on what you find in your newspaper.

On the negative side: Are there many stories in your newspaper with unnamed sources? Are there unattributed opinions in news stories? Are there articles containing viewpoints that are not labeled as analysis?

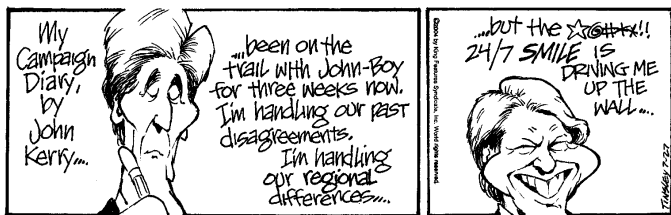
On the positive side: Are stories followed up consistently? Is there a search for both sides of what happened at a "news event"? Is there an effort to look at the positive developments of a news situation?

The next column will look at the efforts of Stripes staffers to provide for their audience "local coverage" of Iraq.

Send comments to Joe Ungaro at Ombudsman, Stars and Stripes, 520 14th St. NW, Suite 350, Washington, D.C. 20045-1301; phone civilian (141) 354-8337; fax (141) 354-8866; or e-mail ombudsman@starsandstripes.osd.mil

Mallard Fillmore

BY BRUCE TINSLEY



Highway projectile

NY NEW YORK — A 60-ton 70-foot concrete slab fell from an overpass on the Grand Central Parkway, severely injuring one person and shutting down the highway in both directions, officials said.

The 47-year-old man suffered severe lacerations to his right leg and forehead and was taken to Elmhurst Hospital Center, police said.

A contractor for the Department of Transportation, Cal-Tran, had been doing work in preparation for the removal of the Steinway Street overpass, which is scheduled for next week, Department of Transportation spokesman Tom Cocola said.

Crime rate down

IL CHICAGO — The crime rate in Illinois dropped last year to the lowest level in more than three decades, according to Illinois State Police records. The total number of serious crimes reported for the statewide was 497,693 in 2003, down from 518,379 the previous year. That's 39 crimes per 1,000 people last year, down from 41.7 crimes per 1,000 in 2002.

Camp not suitable home

SC ROCK HILL — The state Social Services Department took custody of a 9-year-old girl who was living with her mother and stepfather in a makeshift campsite near Blacksburg. Officials found the family near a campfire pit, wooden outhouse and three tents they had called home for much of the past year. The girl was reported in good health and did not require medical attention.

Sculpture swindler

NY NEW YORK — The manager of an Upper East Side warehouse has been arrested in the theft of \$200,000 worth of sculptures from the storage facility, police said.

John Rett, 49, of Valley Stream, N.Y., was arrested on charges of grand larceny and criminal possession of stolen property, police said in a statement.

The sculptures, reportedly works by an artist named Lobo, were stolen from the warehouse, Cirkor's Hayes, on April 20. Police said four of the sculptures were recovered in New York, and three were found in London.

Pharmacy crackdown

NE OMAHA — A new state law requires mail-order pharmacies working in the state to employ at least one full-time pharmacist holding a Nebraska pharmacist's license. State officials say the law is aimed at giving the Nebraska Board of Pharmacy more power to protect residents against unsafe drugs. Some patients are upset they may no longer be able to buy drugs from cheaper, out-of-state pharmacies.

Forced donations

NM SANTA FE — Some city employees represented by

AMERICAN ROUNDUP

a union are angry that they were forced to donate sick leave to an account for employees with medical emergencies. The one-time donation of eight hours of leave came out of employees' most recent paychecks.

More than a litterbug

OH CINCINNATI — A driver pulled over for littering fled a deputy and slammed his car into a utility pole, splitting the vehicle in half and killing four passengers, authorities said.

The driver fled before emergency personnel arrived at the crash, Hamilton County sheriff's officers said. Officers said they found a loaded handgun and 5 1/2 pounds of hallucinogenic mushrooms at the scene.

About four hours later, authorities received a 911 call seeking help for a man reportedly injured in a bicycle crash. They determined the man, Jarred Hunler, was actually the driver of the car and arrested him.

Mystic con artist

CO LONGMONT — A woman claiming to be a psychic has been arrested after police say she conned people out of hundreds of thousands of dollars.



Strange sightings

Explosive Fighter "Ucam" from the DuelMasters trading card game walks the floor at the San Diego convention center during the Comic-Con International Convention.

Cmdr. Craig Earhart said police were contacted earlier this month by a woman who said she lost \$50,000 in cash to Sonia Lorraine Adams, 25. Adams was known as "Psychic Victoria."

Police said Adams sold customers expensive "crystals" — really rose quartz stones — that were supposed to heal illnesses or cast away bad karma.

New light-rail service

CA LOS ANGELES — A groundbreaking ceremony was held at Union Station to kick off the Eastside Gold Line that will provide light-rail service to East Los Angeles. The \$898 million, six-mile extension of the Gold Line will run through Boyle Heights to East Los Angeles, where about 130,000 residents rely heavily on public transportation. The line is expected to open in 2009.

No more curfew law

IN INDIANAPOLIS — A federal judge threw out Indiana's curfew law, ruling that the measure infringes on parental rights and ordering the state to stop enforcing the ban.

The Indiana Civil Liberties Union challenged the law on behalf of a woman who complained that it prohibited her 17-year-old daughter from being out late without adult supervision, even if she had given the teen permission to do so.

A spokeswoman for Indiana Attorney General Steve Carter declined to comment on the ruling, saying state officials had not finished reviewing it. State lawmakers revised the previous law after it was overturned in January by the 7th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals in Chicago.

Mystery samaritan sought

MA BOSTON — A stranger on a bicycle saved the life of a 70-year-old man who was suffering a heart attack. Now the man's family is seeking the mysterious rescuer's identity.

Pasquale Barone, 70, collapsed June 24 after the first toss of his daily boogie game.

But a bicyclist pulled over and performed cardiopulmonary resuscitation until firefighters arrived with a portable defibrillator — and Barone's doctor said the CPR could well have saved his life.

The bicyclist, who boogie court regulars said they had never seen before, has never been seen since.

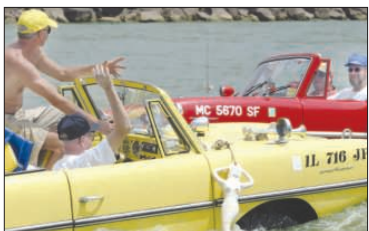
Barone himself insists that his life was saved by an angel sent by St. Anthony — and, given the mysterious appearance of the stranger, that theory has gained some support among his family and friends.

Earth-friendly diesel

AR LITTLE ROCK — Officials at three school districts in Pulaski County said they plan to continue using a biodiesel fuel blend in 149 school buses. The districts were part of a pilot program in which the state reimbursed districts for the extra costs of using the fuel. Officials said the fuel cost about 20 cents more per gallon but delivered greater efficiency.



At the finish line Rabbi Mark Mallach hugs his wife Genya Mallach moments after dipping the front wheel of his bicycle into the ocean at St. Augustine Beach, Fla. Mallach completed a 2,383-mile cross-country bike ride, called the Ridin' Rebbe Tour 2004, that started in San Diego and ended in St. Augustine.



Car surfing Dave "The Wave" Derer, left, slides his Amphicar amphibious vehicle past Chuck Reiner on Grand Lake St. Mary's near Celina, Ohio. About 60 amphibious cars are expected to take part in the Celina Lake Festival as part of the Amphicar Owners Club's annual convention.



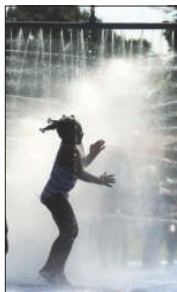
Here piggy piggy piggy Firefighters work to control "Baby," a potbelly pig, as a fire closes in around them in Santa Clarita, Calif.



Dancing the day away Kaitlyn Leonard, a middle school teacher from Chatham, N.J., center, leads her group in an improvised dance step during classes for teachers at Lincoln Center in New York. With Leonard are teachers Sarah McGowan, center left, of the Bronx, N.Y., and Ale Dawson, center right, of New York.



Off in outer space Alan Hurlbert, 5, views a life-size replica of an astronaut at a celebration of the 35th anniversary of Apollo 11 at the Johnson Space Center in Houston.



Keeping cool Six-year-old Khajala Cox's pigtail spins as she twirls through a water mister set up by the Kokomo, Ind., Fire Department at the Kokomo Community Day Care Center.



What's that in the sky? A group of children watch from their bicycles as a balloon belonging to James Wannemacher makes its way along the Great Miami River, looking for a place to land, on the first day of the Ohio Challenge Hot Air Balloon Festival in Middletown, Ohio.

Cranberry expansion

NJ TRENTON — Over the objections of environmentalists, the state Supreme Court cleared the way for limited expansion by commercial cranberry growers in the Pinelands National Reserve. The ruling allows up to 300 more acres of cranberry bogs. The high water table and sandy, acidic soil of the Pinelands are ideal for growing cranberries. New Jersey has nearly 50 cranberry farms.

Cop's shooter released

MI JACKSON — A man who spent nearly 30 years behind bars for shooting a police officer was released from prison Saturday and is seeking a liver transplant.

Gov. Jennifer Granholm commuted Maurice Carter's life sentence because of his rapidly deteriorating health. He was convicted of wounding an off-duty police officer in 1973, but maintained his innocence.

Carter, 60, has been diagnosed with hepatitis C and cirrhosis of the liver. He plans to get medical care while awaiting evaluation for a transplant he was unlikely to receive in prison.

School scores delayed

VA RICHMOND — The state Board of Education voted to delay for one year a requirement that school divisions use the scores of new social studies exams as a factor to determine accreditation.

Poor results at many school divisions prompted local superintendents to notify state education officials and call for a review of the tests.

Online arrest records

PA PITTSBURGH — All arrests in Allegheny County will be published online beginning Aug. 1, officials said. Information will stay online for three days. Details of a particular incident will have to be sought from local police. County officials eventually want to post arrest records and conviction records online.

Fishing for an infection

TX VICTORIA — Two men from Houston have been hospitalized in Victoria after contracting a bacterial infection while wade-fishing in a Port O'Connor bay.

Both men, whose names were not released, had open wounds through which the *Vibrio vulnificus* bacteria entered their bodies while they fished late last week, the Victoria Advocate reported in its Thursday editions. The men had been fishing a few yards apart.

One man was in critical condition and had to have his foot amputated. The other was listed as stable at Citizens Medical Center.

LD med students file suit

CA HAYWARD — Would-be California medical students with learning disabilities filed a discrimination suit this week saying their prospects of becoming doctors are being thwarted because

they aren't given enough time on the medical school entrance exam.

The proposed class-action suit was filed by four students and two advocacy groups. It argues that students who have trouble reading are capable of learning and practicing medicine, provided they're given enough time to complete the Medical College Admission Test in a distraction-free setting.

"Without accommodations, I really can't show what abilities I have," said Brendan Pierce, 28, who has dyslexia and attention deficit disorder. He said he's been given extra time on his exams since junior high and has done well in school.

Employee robs bank

ME BANGOR — A Milbridge woman pleaded guilty in U.S. District Court Wednesday to embezzling \$47,000 from a Cherry-field bank where she worked for just 35 days.

Jessica Beal, 22, faces up to 30 years in prison and a fine of up to \$1 million.

Beal stole the money while she was an employee at a Union Trust Company branch where she worked from April 29 to June 2, 2003, according to court documents. Her job included depositing money into the vault and delivering currency from the vault to tellers.

Famous fly shop closes

TX AUSTIN — The Austin Angler, a fly fishing shop made famous when it was featured in a Visa credit card commercial, is closing after more than two decades in business.

The shop in downtown Austin was portrayed as a quirky little business that emphatically did not take American Express. The ad first aired during the 1985 Super Bowl.

Owner Larry Sunderland said that after surviving three economic slumps, the shop couldn't compete with the new technology of retailing. The shop is closing July 31.

"You have people selling at a discount on eBay, and they don't charge sales tax. I could do this, but I choose not to. That isn't why I was in business," Sunderland said.

Deadly building collapse

FL HOBE SOUND — A town house collapsed during construction, and rescue crews found the bodies of two workers in the rubble. Five other workers were injured.

Most of the workers were pouring and smoothing concrete for the condominium's third floor when it fell to the ground level without warning 20 miles north of West Palm Beach.

Friends and family members of the workers gathered at the scene overnight, praying and hugging as rescue and construction workers used cranes to comb through the jumble of wrecked building forms and slumped concrete.

The victims worked for Macs Construction in Delray Beach, Martin County sheriff's office spokeswoman Jenell Atlas said. The town house is owned by Allied Capital and Development LLC.

Photos and stories from wire services



FACES 'N' PLACES

Caught up in the romance

Rachel McAdams finds self wrapped up in the emotions of her role in 'The Notebook'

BY JAY BOYAR

The Orlando (Fla.) Sentinel

Rachel McAdams has always been wary of films like "The Notebook," the new tear-jerker in which she stars with James Garner, Gene Rowlands and Ryan Gosling.

"I have to be careful with three-handkerchief movies because I get really wrapped up in them," McAdams confesses, speaking by phone from Los Angeles. "Sometimes I shy away from them just because I know I have such an emotional reaction — it kind of sits with me for a few days."

At the same time, she adds, the intense emotions of "The Notebook," which is based on the 1996 Nicholas Sparks best seller, are precisely what drew her to it.

"Everybody has a first love," Sparks has said. "And you go back and wonder, 'What if? This story plays into that.'"

In the film, which opened last month in the United States, McAdams plays Allie Hamilton, a high-spirited debutante in the North Carolina of the 1940s who falls in love with Noah Calhoun (Gosling), a young mill worker. The film asks the question: Will their love survive the pressures of their social differences and the coming of World War II? The role of Allie is miles away from McAdams' calculating queen-bee character in the recent "Mean Girls."

"It's fun to be mean!" says McAdams, who says she is 25. "I know that sounds so horrible, ... but I really wanted to explore her as a sociopath. And I could have gotten much further with that."

As Allie, the actress is far more innocent and passionate.

"She's just like a ball of energy," says McAdams. "You know, if people tap their toes and whistle and dance around and float on clouds, you kind of wonder if maybe they're in love."

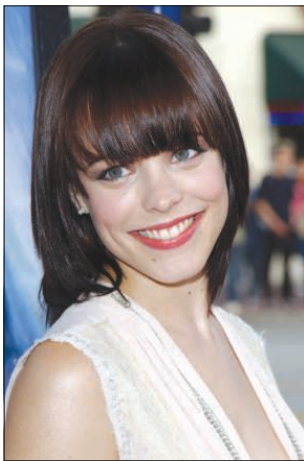
McAdams' love affair with acting began in childhood. Raised near London, Ontario, she performed little skits for her parents, a mover and a nurse.

Eventually, the young Canadian girl overcame her shyness about appearing before strangers. She acted in school productions and also found success in front of crowds as a figure skater.

"It was the idea of a theatrical career seemed implausible until one life-changing day in high school.

"It was the day that college applications were due, and I ran into my drama teacher in the hall," she recalls. When she told the teacher that she was planning to take up "cultural studies" in college, the teacher said that she'd assumed the girl would focus on theater.

"She just gave me the permission," McAdams says. "I guess I was just waiting for someone to say: Are you crazy? Do what you love."



Canadian actress Rachel McAdams wanted to get the southern flavor of her "Notebook" character right, so she headed to Charleston, S.C., two months before production started to learn more about the people and their ways.

After studying theater at Toronto's York University, McAdams appeared in Canadian films and landed her first role in a Hollywood movie. That would be "The Hot Chick," which Joshua Rich of Entertainment Weekly describes as "the 2002 body-switching flop in which she channeled Rod Schneider while pole-dancing at a strip club."

To prepare for "The Notebook," McAdams watched grand productions such as "Giant." She also attended dance and art classes, signed up for tennis lessons and even took "debutante training."

As a Canadian, McAdams wanted to get the Southern flavor of her "Notebook" character just right.

"Ryan and I went to Charleston about two months early, before we started shooting, to get a feel for the South," she says. "For the heat. For the food. For the way people talk."

She also went to a library. "I took out books on the 'Southern woman' and all that she is, which is quite a woman," offers McAdams.

She discovered that Dixie gals have "really good survival skills" and that "they seem to rebound really well." Like Scarlett O'Hara, she adds, with that "I'll never go hungry again" spirit.

If all this preparation suggests a lack of spontaneity, McAdams' performance in "The Notebook" attests otherwise. The key to her work, she explains, is physical ease — in part, a legacy from her

youth as a figure skater.

"It helped me a lot to be in touch with my physical self," she says. "Whenever you feel you're getting really cerebral with a character, the best way to get out of that trap is to get physical."

Next up for McAdams is "The Wedding Crashers," a comedy starring Owen Wilson and Vince Vaughn about two friends who crash wedding parties to meet women. McAdams plays a bridesmaid who becomes involved with Wilson.

In the meantime, she's focused on "The Notebook" and her thoroughly love-struck character. How much of a stretch was that, anyway? "I am," she admits, "a hopeless romantic."

Humorist's characters to be on screen

The quirky characters of Minnesota humorist Garrison Keillor's "A Prairie Home Companion" may be headed for the silver screen.

A cinematic version of the popular radio show is tentatively set to begin shooting in January at the Fitzgerald Theater, with director Robert Altman at the helm, the Minneapolis-St. Paul Star Tribune reported.

Keillor wrote the screenplay — about life backstage at the radio show. The movie is expected to star Meryl Streep and Lily Tomlin as a fading sister duet act and Tom Waits and Lyle Lovett as Dusty and Lefty, the singing cowboys.

"Altman and myself — that's a happy combination of American masters," said Tony Judge, who is coordinating the project for Prairie Home Productions. "They've become good working partners."



Keillor

Channing's acting awards stolen

Carol Channing's Tony Award for her performance in "Hello, Dolly!" and an Emmy and a Golden Globe — were stolen from her storage unit in Hollywood, Channing's publicist said Friday.

"Ever since it happened, I've been checking eBay every day just to make sure these things haven't shown up," publicist Harlan Boll said. "You never know what something like that would sell for."

Boll said the unit was broken into about three months ago, and Channing later filed a police report. She has since cleared out the remaining items and taken them to a home in Northern California.

"Carol is upset, yes. She wants the awards back because they mean something to her, but she's thankful no one got hurt. In the end, they're just material things," Boll said.

Colombian crooner goes under the knife

Colombian crooner Charlie Zaa underwent surgery Friday at a clinic in Bogota, Colombia, to treat an undisclosed kidney problem, said a spokeswoman for his record label, Sonulux.

Zaa, 30, a bolero performer who shot to fame across Latin America for his interpretations of classics by artists such as Olindo Carreras and Julio Jaramillo, is expected to make a full recovery, spokeswoman Monica Casas said.

She declined to provide details of the operation.

Zaa was forced to cut short a tour in Puerto Rico to promote his new album, "Puro Sentimiento," earlier last week after suffering from severe pain.

Zaa began his career with renowned salsa bands Grupo Niche and Guayana before going solo with the release of the album "Sentimientos" in 1996.



Zaa

Got legs? Duff will help decide that

Who's got legs? Who knows how to use them? Hilary Duff will decide just that when she judges who has the best pair of legs in New York.

The singer-actress will be joined Wednesday in Times Square by her sister, Haylie, for the contest, sponsored by Gillette, dubbed "Legs of a Goddess." The Duff sisters will be looking for women with "shapely and toned legs, and a confident and enthusiastic attitude."

The contest is part of a nationwide search, the winner of which will win a "Goddess Giveaway" worth \$30,000, the sponsor said in a recent statement.

Hilary, 16, starred in "The Lizzie McGuire Movie." Haylie, 19, recently appeared in "Napoleon Dynamite."

Choreographer Kris Judd, ex-husband of Jennifer Lopez, also will be a judge.

Stories and photos from The Associated Press



Rachel McAdams plays Allie Hamilton, a high-spirited debutante from North Carolina, in the romantic drama "The Notebook."

Horoscope

It's a hands-on day. Venus and Mars strike an enervating dynamic that makes it impossible to continue to sit around and see what happens. We're driven to jump in and mix it up. This is true both in love and at work. There will be talking out of line and inappropriate interventions, but that's all part of the mechanism of change.

Joyce Jillson



TODAY'S BIRTHDAY

(July 27). This birthday marks the beginning of a new chapter in your life. You're feeling more in control of what happens, and you're standing up for yourself and handling situations that were once difficult. This wave of confidence attracts a new job in September. Singles find love at work in the fall. You are especially compatible with Capricorn and Pisces.

ARIES (March 21-April 19)

Anything that can be improved upon (in either your external or internal environment) goes on a long list. It's so easy for you to see your shortcomings now, but instead of dwelling on them, give yourself constructive criticism.

TAURUS (April 20-May 20)

What seemed just like yesterday now feels deficient, including your small apartment or older-model car. Do whatever you can to bolster your self-esteem in non-materialistic ways, as dwelling on what you don't have wears you out.

GEMINI (May 21-June 21)

Like a twin who depends on his or her sibling to set the mood, you may rely too heavily on outside forces to determine your attitude. Prevent this tendency by considering carefully what you decide to react to and what you let slide.

CANCER (June 22-July 22)

When you meet someone who has achieved much in an arena where you yourself would like to become successful, offer to take this person to dinner—somewhere nice, of course. Acts like this will cause you to expand your life.

LEO (July 23-Aug. 22)

The enemy is that part of you which feels the need to complain. It's a powerful force that compels you to moan, but if you resist, you'll find your power.

Why go on like a broken record when you can do something about it?

VIRGO (Aug. 23-Sept. 22)

The ground rules when sharing and shaking—it's like a continental drift that will eventually change the landscape of your profession. Instead of being scared, be on the cutting edge, or at least interview people who are.

LIBRA (Sept. 23-Oct. 23)

Handle business early when you're like a walking computer, fantastic at keeping the figures straight and itemizing long lists in your head. Tasks you would usually do by rote seem to have a whole different meaning now.

SCORPIO (Oct. 24-Nov. 21)

You'll feel like letting up on that strong self-discipline you've established, but don't. Now is the time to persevere. If you let yourself get off the productivity train, it will be weeks before you can get back on.

SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22-Dec. 21)

The more interest you show in something, the more interesting that thing becomes. Great joy is found today when you decide to be a connoisseur, a fan and an enthusiast.

Fellow devotees would love to chat with you.

CAPRICORN (Dec. 22-Jan. 19)

You'll be flowing with your emotions, but don't let them determine what action you take. Be driven by principle instead. You'll spend five mornings getting a clearer understanding of what you need for the big and little picture.

AQUARIUS (Jan. 20-Feb. 18)

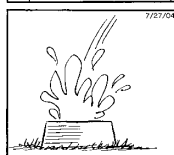
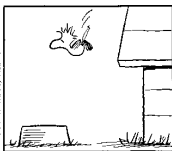
You're experiencing a growth spurt and may become suddenly uncomfortable with who you are. If you're unhappy with your outer shell, consider the thoughts you're thinking about what you look like.

PISCES (Feb. 19-March 20)

If you feel like you're just going along with the status quo, today brings a wake-up call. You don't have to decide exactly what to do about it just yet, but take an honest look at your situation. Put off signing contracts.

Creators Syndicate

Peanuts



7/27/04

Calvin and Hobbes



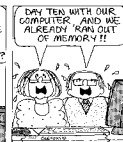
Jump Start



Zits



Cathy



Hi and Lois



Beetle Bailey



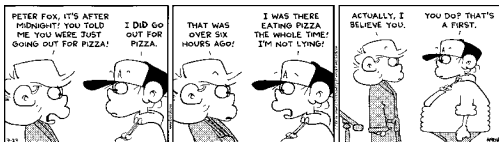
Red Rover



Better or Worse



Foxrot



B.C.



Baby Blues



Spider Man



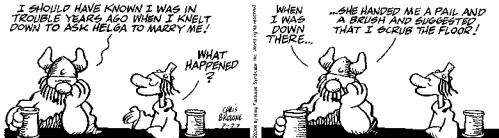
Blondie



Dilbert



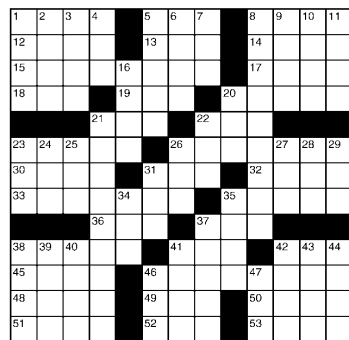
Hagar



Garfield



Eugene Sheffer Crossword



Across

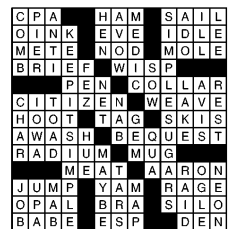
- 1 Item on stage
- 5 Mrs. McKinley
- 8 Aid in crime
- 12 Corporate symbol
- 13 "Sound of Music" extra
- 14 In a bad way
- 15 April observance
- 17 '60s Secretary of State
- 18 Exist
- 19 Conger, e.g.
- 20 Correspond
- 21 Send speedily
- 22 Flightless bird
- 23 Fess up
- 26 Adages
- 30 Burn a bit
- 31 Peach stone
- 32 Alibacore
- 33 Napoleon-Clark product
- 35 Afghanistan's capital
- 36 Recipe measurement
- 37 Kids' card game
- 38 Strength
- 41 Martini ingredient
- 42 Grecian vessel
- 45 Jai —
- 46 Napoleon's downfall
- 48 Mah-jongg piece
- 49 Make up your mind
- 50 Loosen
- 51 Partner's share
- 52 Crucial

- 53 Part of a Lone Ranger costume

Down

- 1 Defendant's answer
- 2 Bellow
- 3 Shrek, e.g.
- 4 Cauldron
- 5 Alphabetized list
- 6 Two-way
- 7 Whatever amount
- 8 Instrumental equivalent of lip-synching?
- 9 Unclear image
- 10 Differently
- 11 Youngster
- 16 Passion
- 20 "Backdraft" bigwig
- 22 Break a fast
- 23 Request
- 24 First St.
- 25 West of Hollywood
- 26 Deep — (discard)
- 27 Gist
- 28 Wildebeest
- 29 Actor Mineo
- 31 Energy
- 34 Enthusiast
- 35 Welles role
- 37 Jocular
- 38 SAT section
- 39 Pelvic bones
- 40 Unmitigated nerve
- 41 State stupidly
- 42 Radius' neighbor
- 43 Fishing gear
- 44 Recess
- 46 Moo goo gai pan
- 47 Piratic potato

Answer to Previous Puzzle



7-27

CRYPTOQUIP

N P EVXG IHNVOY NI
 ZGNHHNFO VFNVF MXNRC.
 EVX RVXWZ MVSFNFOV IUE
 NY'I U WCCSE PUXRCY.
 Yesterday's Cryptoquip: HIS FATHER REALLY
 LIKED THE IDEA OF BUYING A DINER, SO HE
 BOUGHT A STEAK IN IT.

Today's Cryptoquip Clue: H equals P

Cleaning bathroom takes all kinds

Dear Abby: I'm writing regarding the letter from "Former Houseguest," who complains about his hostess rushing into the bathroom and scrubbing it every morning after he and his fiancée had showered.

When I was a newlywed, I was an insecure hostess and overly concerned about what my guests might think of the state of my house. Perhaps she was trying to impress upon them that she was a capable homemaker. Her rushing in to clean the bathroom may have nothing to do with her not wanting them there.

Been There in Rowlett, Texas

Dear Abby: Perhaps not, other readers read the letter through the prism of their own experiences, too.

Read on:

Dear Abby: I have a stepdaughter who has a severe case of obsessive-compulsive disorder

(OCD). This poor soul can't have company because she must spend all day and all night cleaning the entire house before they arrive. When we visit her, we must be careful not to touch the walls, or she will scrub them, too.

Some people are not even aware that they have this illness until it's so out of control they are advised to seek help. This could be the case with that hostess. It's a terrible illness that results from a chemical imbalance in the brain.

— A Reader, Nashua, N.H.

Dear Reader: Thanks for pointing it out. A reader from Texarkana, Texas, who suffers from OCD

e-mailed me to suggest that people who have this disorder should contact the Obsessive-Compulsive Foundation Inc. It offers support and education for people with OCD-related disorders, their friends, families and professionals, and it also supports research into the causes

and effective treatments. Its Web site is: www.foundation.org. **Read on:**

Dear Abby: I also clean my bathroom every morning, and I am not alone. A lot of people are on a "system" set up by someone we call "the FlyLady." ("Fly" stands for "Finally Loving Yourself.") She is a county commissioner in the state of Tennessee, who instructs us to get up, get dressed to the shoes, put in a load of laundry, and make our bathrooms shine — every day, first thing in the morning. The bathroom is then presentable for any guests who might come later in the day.

If you would like to see this for yourself, go to www.flylady.net. She is wonderful. She talks about having peace in your homes and a lot of other wonderful things.

— Flying In Oregon

Letters for this column — with your name and phone number — should be addressed to Dear Abby, P.O. Box 69440, Los Angeles, CA 90069. Readers can write to Abby on the Internet at: <http://www.uxpress.com/dearabby>. Universal Press Syndicate

Dear Abby



Unsure if relationship is love

Dear Annie: I am a 54-year-old woman, divorced for 10 years.

Men seem to like me, but nothing has come of it. In most cases, it was my decision to end the relationships — one man was verbally abusive, and another was too busy with his career and sports. I knew I'd never love high enough in his life. The others were people I thought were pleasant and nice, but I wasn't in love with them.

I have a full life with a high-paying career, and I'm involved in many activities, but I'm tired of dating. It's frustrating. I feel lonely and disconnected, and I want to be part of a couple and have some stability.

For the past three months, I've been dating a wonderful man who is in love with me. "Jack" is 57. He's a sweet, good person. I enjoy his company, but I suspect it's mostly because we go to fun places. I really, really want that life. But I am not in love with

Annie's Mailbox



Jack. I feel guilty when we're together.

The thought of giving up this nice person to return to the agony of dating is just horrible.

— **Confused and Miserable**

Dear Confused: We know dating can be a drag, but we think you are expecting too much, too soon. Those sweep-you-off-your-feet relationships are very exciting, but the feeling rarely lasts. Love doesn't have to hit like lightning. It can grow slowly and steadily, if you have an open heart and are patient.

Give Jack a little more time. If you still don't think you can love him, cut him loose, and let him find someone who can. Since you have no problem attracting men, you might want to spend some time figuring out what, exactly, you want from them.

Dear Annie: I'd been pretty healthy all my life, when suddenly I could not eat a thing without

bloating, diarrhea and gas. After a year of seeing different doctors and having a battery of tests, I finally was told I had a microscopic intestinal parasite.

I had never heard of this problem before, but the doctor said it is fairly common. Many physicians still believe you can get parasites only by traveling abroad, but in reality, the growth of the imported food industry has greatly increased the incidence of infection in this country.

My illness was treated, and I'm fine now, but I worry that others might go through the same nightmare.

— **Kingston, N.Y.**

Dear Kingston: We truly live in a global community today, and with imported food and increased air travel, diseases are no longer confined to particular areas of the world. Thank you for the timely warning.

Annie's Mailbox is written by Kathy Mitchell and Marcy Sugar, longtime editors of the Ann Landers column. Please e-mail your questions to: anniesmailbox@comcast.net, or write to: Annie's Mailbox, c/o Creators Syndicate, 5777 W. Century Blvd., Suite 700, Los Angeles, CA 90045.

Creators Syndicate

JUMBLE

Unscramble these four Jumbles, one letter to each square, to form four ordinary words.

DUXEE

JOUMB

PYRSOD

KAUMPE

Answer: " " " " IT

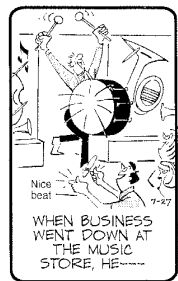
Yesterday's

Jumbles: HAZEL TOKEN HARROW TWADRY

Answer: What the bricklayer did when she changed her mind — THREW IN THE TROWEL.

THAT SCRAMBLED WORD GAME

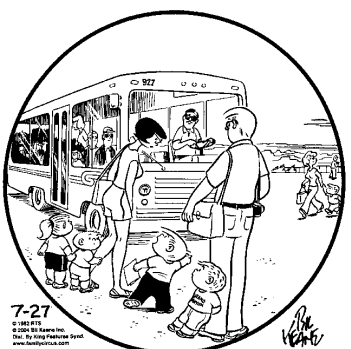
by Henri Arnold and Mike Argiron



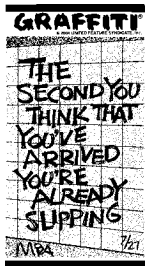
Now arrange the circled letters to form the surprise answer, suggested by the above cartoon.

Answer: " " " " IT (Answers tomorrow)

Family Circus



"Is this bus and the mules the only rides to go on at the Grand Canyon?"

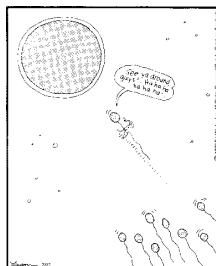


Dennis the Menace



© Gary Larson

The Far Side



Non Sequitur





EUROPEAN FORECAST

Benelux: Partly cloudy. Highs in the mid-70s and lows in the mid-50s.

Britain, Ireland: Mostly cloudy. Highs in the upper 60s to mid-70s and lows in the upper 50s.

Croatia and Bosnia: Mostly cloudy with isolated thunderstorms in the afternoon. Highs in the mid-80s and lows in the upper 50s.

France: Mostly cloudy. Highs in the mid-70s to lower 80s and lows in the upper 50s to upper 60s.

Northern Germany: Mostly cloudy. Highs in the 70s and lows in the lower to mid-50s.

Southern Germany: Mostly cloudy. Highs in the mid-70s to lower 70s and lows in the mid-50s.

Hungary: Mostly cloudy with rain showers. Highs in the upper 60s and lows in the mid-50s.

Northern Italy: Mostly cloudy. Highs in the mid-80s and lows in the lower 60s and lower 70s.

Southern Italy: Partly cloudy. Highs in the mid-80s and lows in the mid-50s.

Kosovo: Mostly cloudy with rain showers and isolated thunderstorms. Highs in the lower 80s and lows in the mid-60s.

Norway: Mostly cloudy with rain showers. Highs in the mid to upper 60s and lows in the lower 50s.

Portugal, Spain: Sunny. Highs in the lower 90s on the east coast, lower 100s in the south and 90s elsewhere. Lows in the lower 80s in the south and 60s elsewhere.

Turkey: Partly cloudy. Highs in the upper 90s on the west coast and mid-80s elsewhere. Lows in the mid-50s inland and lower 70s elsewhere.

AFRICA

Cape Town	63	42	Mogadishu	84	74
Dakar	69	62	Nairobi	84	74
Freetown	82	74	Rabat	85	65
Antananarivo	80	67	Tripoli	86	71

THE WORLD

Amsterdam	HI	LO	Manila	HI	LO
Bahrain	112	86	Mexico City	79	63
Beijing	89	66	Montreal	79	63
Berlin	87	74	Riyadh	113	84
Bermuda	82	76	Rio de Jan	74	62
Bombay	81	65	Saudi	85	71
Helsinki	76	58	Sofia	75	56
Hong Kong	88	80	Sydney	83	45
Lisbon	89	67	Tokyo	86	75

TODAY'S STATESIDE OUTLOOK

Alabama	HI	LO	Ohio	HI	LO
Alaska	85	68	OK	81	61
Arizona	74	59	OK	81	61
Arkansas	75	59	OK	81	61
California	77	64	OK	81	61
Colorado	77	64	OK	81	61
Connecticut	81	65	OK	81	61
Delaware	81	65	OK	81	61
District of Columbia	81	65	OK	81	61
Florida	81	65	OK	81	61
Georgia	81	65	OK	81	61
Hawaii	81	65	OK	81	61
Idaho	81	65	OK	81	61
Illinois	81	65	OK	81	61
Indiana	81	65	OK	81	61
Iowa	81	65	OK	81	61
Kansas	81	65	OK	81	61
Kentucky	81	65	OK	81	61
Louisiana	81	65	OK	81	61
Maine	81	65	OK	81	61
Maryland	81	65	OK	81	61
Massachusetts	81	65	OK	81	61
Michigan	81	65	OK	81	61
Minnesota	81	65	OK	81	61
Mississippi	81	65	OK	81	61
Missouri	81	65	OK	81	61
Montana	81	65	OK	81	61
Nebraska	81	65	OK	81	61
Nevada	81	65	OK	81	61
New Hampshire	81	65	OK	81	61
New Jersey	81	65	OK	81	61
New Mexico	81	65	OK	81	61
New York	81	65	OK	81	61
North Carolina	81	65	OK	81	61
North Dakota	81	65	OK	81	61
Ohio	81	65	OK	81	61
Oklahoma	81	65	OK	81	61
Oregon	81	65	OK	81	61
Pennsylvania	81	65	OK	81	61
Rhode Island	81	65	OK	81	61
South Carolina	81	65	OK	81	61
South Dakota	81	65	OK	81	61
Tennessee	81	65	OK	81	61
Texas	81	65	OK	81	61
Vermont	81	65	OK	81	61
Virginia	81	65	OK	81	61
Washington	81	65	OK	81	61
West Virginia	81	65	OK	81	61
Wisconsin	81	65	OK	81	61
Wyoming	81	65	OK	81	61

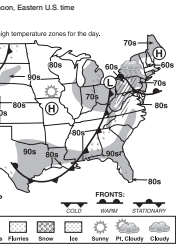


For current weather watches, warnings, and 5-day forecasts go to the USAF Operational Weather Squadron home page at <http://www.ows.sembach.af.mil>

SUN & MOON

Sunrise (London)	Today 05:10	Tomorrow 05:12
Sunset (London)	Today 20:57	Tomorrow 20:55
Sunrise (Frankfurt)	Today 05:07	Tomorrow 05:09
Sunset (Frankfurt)	Today 20:57	Tomorrow 20:55

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STARS&STRIPES

How great is winning six straight?

Armstrong's feats put him in the argument

ON the toughest stretch of road, during the toughest stage of what is arguably the toughest sporting event in the world, Lance Armstrong put the hammer down and roared toward the top of L'Alpe d'Huez. It was a move of such breathtaking power that most of his rivals would have had trouble matching it while driving a car, let alone pedaling a bike.

It was also the stuff of legend. It was Muhammad Ali floating like a butterfly and stinging like a bee; Tiger Woods devouring Augusta National with his "A" game; Michael Jordan eye-balls-level-with-the-rim at his craftiest; Babe Ruth hauling a scrum of would-be tacklers into the end zone; Babe Ruth calling his shot.

Take your pick, since the easiest way to start an argument in any sports bar the world over is to do just that.

"Top three athletes of all time, without a doubt, and maybe even higher," said Bud Greenspan, the venerable documentary filmmaker of countless Olympics. "He keeps on winning, keeps on getting better, and what more can you ask from the man? The only drawback, it seems to me, is where his sport fits in the world of athletics."

On Sunday, at the end of bicycle racing's version of the Super Bowl, the 32-year-old Texan rolled into the French capital on what amounted to a ceremonial parade, an unprecedented sixth Tour de France title. The five-deep crowds packing both sides of the Champs-Élysées shouted, stomped and whistled their approval as Armstrong — easily picked out in the leader's distinctive yellow jersey — zoomed by in the middle of the technical or blur.

It was four days earlier, as crowds nearly twice that large lined the road that ended at a ski



Jim Litke

station 6,070 feet above sea level, that Armstrong secured the victory and cemented his place in the galaxy of the world's greatest athletes.

On an ascent that's so steep it is classified as "hors categorie," literally, "out of category," Armstrong rose up on his pedals and averaged — averaged — 14.5 mph.

The feat crushed his opponents' spirits and paved the way for Armstrong to ride past the quartet of cycling's five-time Tour champions — Eddy Merckx of Belgium, Miguel Indurain of Spain and local heroes Bernard Hinault and Jacques Anquetil — and begin a fresh chapter in the 101-year history of the race.

"It's special to stand on arguably one of the most famous boulevards in the world and have your own national anthem played. And to have it done six times," Armstrong said, "is incredible."

The man is a dynasty. There's no arguing that, even if he doesn't return for a seventh bid. His victories have all come in a row, and at an age when all the other cycling stars were no longer dominating the Tour.

When you boil it down, cycling remains an individual pursuit, so it's better to measure his six-year run alongside the career achievements of a few other athletes. Hurdler Edwin Moses was unbeaten over the 400-meter hurdles for 10 years, a streak of 107 races; heavyweight champion Rocky Marciano put away 49 straight opponents, retiring unbeaten; Cal Ripken played in 2,632 baseball games stretched over 17 seasons, the last few in an era when some players went on the injured list if the wrong brand of shampoo was put in the visiting

locker room; Martina Navratilova won six straight Wimbledon tennis titles from 1982 to 1987; Wayne Gretzky collected eight NHL scoring titles; Jordan and Wilt Chamberlain seven each in pro basketball, and all picked up a few championships besides.

There's no such thing as an inclusive list and whether Armstrong gets his due will depend ultimately, on whom you ask. Some fans, after all, are sure to argue that all he does is ride a bike.

And so those who contend hitting a 95-plus mph fastball with a stick is the toughest thing to do, won't even rank his accomplishment alongside Joe DiMaggio's 56-game hitting streak. And those who believe hitting a stationary ball with a walking stick turned upside down will throw Byron Nelson's 11 consecutive PGA Tour victories in one season atop Armstrong's feat.

Because there are no rules, ultimately it comes down to arguments. What no one can dispute is that Armstrong, like every great champion stretching from Ruth in the Jazz Age to Woods today, has slipped the bonds of his sport and soared into the public imagination. The greatest don't just dominate a game, they grow it and change the way it's played and perceived.

Sales of Trek bicycles, the brand Armstrong rides, have tripled since he won his first title in 1999 and the \$10,000, carbon-fiber, 24-carat, gold leaf-anodized model he rode onto the Champs-Élysées won't hit the stores for another few months. Similarly, Armstrong has forced millions of TV viewers back in the States to zap through their cable menus and find the Outdoor Life Network.

And how's this for an impact: He's even given the Post Office something to finally grow about.

Jim Litke is a national sports columnist at The Associated Press. Write to him at: jlitke@ap.org



Second-place finisher Andreas Klöden gives six-time Tour de France winner Lance Armstrong his due, bowing on the podium on Sunday.

Despite renewed passion, Armstrong unsure about '05

BY JEROME PUGMIRE

The Associated Press

PARIS — Rediscovering the joy of cycling was as important as winning a record sixth straight Tour de France title to Lance Armstrong.

Pumping his fists and chasing stage victories with the enthusiasm of a first-year rider, Armstrong was exuberant and daring throughout the grueling three-week race. On Sunday, the Texan completed his record-setting ride in cycling's showcase event, sipping champagne while in the saddle during the final stage.

"This year, I had the motivation of a rookie," Armstrong said.

Sunday's final ride into Paris along the tree-lined Champs-Élysées was a lap of honor for Armstrong. Even Jan Ullrich, his harshest finisher this Tour, gulped down a glass offered by Armstrong's team manager through his car window.

While the 32-year-old Armstrong was clearly delighted to eclipse five-time champions Eddy Merckx, Jacques Anquetil, Miguel Indurain and Bernard Hinault, he expressed a greater thrill in renewing his passion for cycling.

"It's as if I was with my five friends and we were 13 years old, and we all had new bikes and we said, 'OK, we're going to race from here to there,'" he said. "And you want to beat your friends more than anything. You're sprinting and you're rearing. It was like that for me."

Eight years ago, Armstrong was given less than a 50 percent chance of overcoming testicular cancer that spread to his lungs and brain. He astonished everyone — including himself — by winning his first Tour in 1999.

He called it "a complete shock and surprise," adding that he never thought he'd win "a second one or a third one or how many."

He had a burning desire to keep winning but still hasn't decided whether he'll compete next year.

"I don't know what I'll do next summer. I suspect I'll be here. It's too big of a race. My only hesitance is I think the people and the event perhaps need a change, new faces, a new winner," he said. "If I'm here, I race to win."

This is Armstrong's finest Tour. He dominated the Pyrenees and the Alps, and won five solo stages and a team time-trial with his U.S. Postal Service squad. Only one rider, Ivan Basso of Italy, could keep up with him.

"I was surprised that some of the rivals were no better," Armstrong said. "Some of them they just completely disappeared."

Armstrong shook Basso for good on Wednesday's trying time trial up L'Alpe d'Huez.

The Texan also settled a score, convinc-

ingly beating Ullrich in both time trials — a crucial psychological lift for Armstrong after the German beat him by more than 90 seconds in the first clock race in 2003.

Although longtime rivals, Ullrich and Armstrong are noble adversaries.

"I have an enormous respect for the way Lance rides," Ullrich said.

Belgian rider Tom Boonen won Sunday's prestigious final sprint on the Champs-Élysées, with Armstrong safely behind in the peck.

Robbie McEwen of Australia won the green jersey, his second, as the Tour's best sprinter. Richard Virenque of France won a record seventh spotted jersey, awarded for picking up points on the Tour's many mountain climbs. Vladimir Karpetov of Russia wore the white jersey as best young rider.

Armstrong says he's interested in trying other races — the Tour of Italy, Classics, and beating the one-hour cycling world record held by Britain's Chris Boardman.

Busch vying for Cup; Earnhardt gets break

The Associated Press

LOUDON, N.H. — Dale Earnhardt Jr. was on an airplane headed home by the time Kurt Busch got to victory lane at New Hampshire International Speedway.

Both were satisfied that Sunday's Siemens 300 kept them on the road to a possible NASCAR Nextel Cup championship with seven races left until the new championship showdown begins.

"I believe our chase for the championship started today in the first Loudon race instead of the second Loudon race," Busch said.

after moving from ninth to sixth in the points with his convincing win.

The injured Earnhardt remained second in the points, thanks to some relief from rookie Martin Truex Jr.

Busch started 32nd in the 43-car field, worked his way to the front and was the only driver able to stay with pole-winner Ryan Newman through most of the 300-mile race.

Busch led a race-high 187 laps, but Busch passed him twice and, finally, pulled away from both Newman and runner-up Jeff Gordon at the end for his second win of the season and 10th of his career.

"We continued to work on our car and make it better, whereas Newman may have thought he had a great car but didn't make adjustments," Busch said.

A number of drivers had their eyes on the season standings Sunday, with the top 10 drivers, along with others within 400 points of the lead after the 26th race, competing for the championship over the last 10 races of the season.

Busch's first win since Bristol in March solidified his chances of vying for the title when the same flat, 1.58-mile New Hampshire oval on Sept. 19.

"I thought we had to apply pressure this week and get our 10 races going right now," Busch said.



Dale Earnhardt Jr. is helped out of his car during the NASCAR Nextel Siemens 300 in Loudon, N.H., Sunday. Earnhardt raced his car until the first caution of the race, then turned his car over to Martin Truex Jr.

Earnhardt, with second-degree burns on his legs, neck and chin from a crash a week earlier during a sports car event, held on to second place in the standings after starting the race to get the championship points. He gave up the seat on lap 61 to Truex, the Busch Series leader Jimmie Johnson, who swept both New Hampshire races last year, struggled to an 11th-place finish on Sunday but increased his lead over Earnhardt from 105 to 165 points, with Gordon 202 back.

Earnhardt, hoping for an early yellow flag, had to wait 59 laps before Ricky Craven bounced off Elliott Sadler and hit the wall, bringing out the first caution. The ensuing driver change was flawless, with a crewman helping Earnhardt out of the car and Truex sliding in, buckling up and driving away without losing a lap.

"It ain't no fun getting out, I'll tell you that," said Earnhardt, sitting behind the pit box in the Dale Earnhardt Inc., team's pit stall and watching Truex drive his No. 8 Chevrolet.

"My injuries really, really hurt bad," Earnhardt said, a smile belying his words. "It's a pain I ain't never felt before."

Truex said he felt good about his first Cup race.

"All they wanted was last-place points," he said. "It's better than 43rd. They wanted Junior to start the race and me to get in and get everything I could. And 15 spots is 15 spots," he added, just a little off on his math.

Newman led the first 170 laps before Busch got him on the backstretch. Those two battled at the front for a while, with Newman regaining the top spot on a pit stop on lap 216, only to see Busch drive his Roush Racing Ford to the front again on lap 233, with Gordon's Hendrick Motorsports Chevrolet also getting past Newman's Penske Racing South Dodge.

Gordon, who has three victories here, tried hard to get past Busch, getting close several times on restarts, including one just three laps from the end. But Busch was just too strong, pulling away each time and beating Gordon to the finish line by 0.607 seconds.

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ons — about four car-lengths.

The four-time Cup champion said he couldn't quite catch Busch.

"I would have had to give him a pretty good nudge to get him out of the way and I think that could have cost us a win or a second place, so I didn't do that," Gordon said.

The race was slowed by 12 caution flags for 62 laps. Most of the yellows were brought out by crashes, including two by local favorite Craven, but there were no injuries as the energy-absorbing SAFER barriers got a real workout.

Franchitti earns first IRL win

WEST ALLIS, Wis. — Dario Franchitti took advantage of the first and last caution flags for his first IRL victory.

Franchitti started in seventh and got great help from the first yellow flag on lap 39. He pitted and changed his tires, and that made all the difference for him Sunday in the inaugural Menards A.J. Foy Indy 225 at The Milwaukee Mile.

"It wasn't the best start I've ever made, but it was clean," he said. "When we put new tires on,

the car really came to life at that point, and I started moving through the field."

Then as the race was coming to a close, Franchitti held off Buddy Rice after a late restart. Rice finished second, followed by Sam Hornish Jr.

Franchitti was relieved and concerned when the final yellow flag came out with less than 15 laps to go after Jacques Lazier hit the wall in the second turn. He had Rice behind him, but also was struggling to pass Alex Barron, who was at the end of the lead lap.

Rice wasn't pleased to see the yellow flag.

"I was hoping that the laps would stay green until the end, because I was closing on him," Rice said. "But with a few laps to go, I never really had a chance for a run."

Franchitti's win was his first in the IRL after missing almost all of last season with a back injury. The Scot competed in just three races, two before he injured his back in a motorcycle crash and one before undergoing surgery.

His best IRL finish had been second on June 12 at the Texas Motor Speedway.

Tracy back in title contention

VANCOUVER, British Columbia — Defending Champ Cartiholder Paul Tracy vaulted himself back into championship contention Sunday with a victory at the Molson Indy Vancouver.

Tracy started from the pole and controlled the entire race for his second straight win at Vancouver. Mike Mansueti of France took over his way up from 12th to finish in second place, about 5.5 seconds behind Tracy.

American rookie A.J. Allmendinger finished his first podium finish for upstart Ruston Racing, placing third.

Tracy, who was winless since the series opener on April 18, moved into third place in the series points standings, passing fellow Canadian Patrick Carpentier.

Series leader Sebastien Bourdais of France finished fifth in his Newman Haas Racing car, retaining a hefty lead in the standings over second-ranked Bruno Junqueira of Brazil, who finished fourth.

Franco reels in fourth PGA Tour victory

The Associated Press

MILWAUKEE — Carlos Franco hates to practice and loves to fish.

He didn't spend his free time at the U.S. Open Championship at the driving range. Instead, he had a fishing lure dipped into a pond as much as possible.

The unorthodox approach helped Franco win the title Sunday. He carried a 3-under 67 at Brown Deer Park to beat Fred Funk (66) and Brett Quigley (69) by two strokes for his fourth PGA Tour win and second in Milwaukee.

"I fished three days. I caught plenty because his wife, Celsa, cooked the day's catch herself."

She also ventured out to Brown Deer Park with her children to watch her husband and play, something she hadn't done since he joined the PGA Tour full-time five years ago.

And what did she have to say to him after he won \$630,000, his biggest paycheck ever? "She doesn't speak to me, only crying," Franco said.

Patrick Sheehan (70), Billy Andrade (67) and Olin Browne (67) finished three shots back, tied for fourth place in the tournament formerly known as the Greater Milwaukee Open.

Only Franco and Funk carried four rounds in the 60s. Franco isn't known for his accuracy off the tee, but he did master Milwaukee's short, roughgreen course during the second round. How?

"Because maybe the Milwaukee course likes me," he said with a shrug and a smile. Defending champion Kenny Perry (70) tied for seventh, his worst finish in five tries at Brown Deer, where he had been in the top five last four years.

Franco is the seventh two-time winner in Milwaukee. He began the final round tied with Quigley and Sheehan atop the leader board, his first 54-hole lead since the 2000 COMPAQ Classic of New Orleans, which he won in a playoff to defend his '99 title.

Neither Sheehan nor Quigley, who tied off last, had ever led going into the final day of a tournament on the PGA Tour, and the inexperience proved costly.

Sheehan made the turn a stroke ahead of Franco at 3 under for the round, but posted a bogey on No. 11, a double bogey on 12 and a bogey on 13. Quigley, who also tied for a bogey on the 2001 Greater Greensboro Chrysler Classic, shot a steady but unspectacular round, never making a charge for what would have been his first win on Tour. Nobody shot better than 4 under on a cool, breezy day. The golfers credited the demanding pin placements and wicked rough as much as swirling winds for the lack of low scoring.

Cowher agrees to 2-year extension

The Associated Press

PITTSBURGH — Pittsburgh Steelers coach Bill Cowher signed a two-year contract extension on Monday that runs through 2007 — the second time since 2001 he has agreed to a new deal after his team missed the playoffs the preceding season.

Cowher agreed to his current contract, which runs through the 2005 season, after the Steelers rebounded from consecutive losing seasons by going 9-7 in 2004 but missed the playoffs.

The 47-year-old Cowher has a 115-76-1 record in 12 seasons, with only three losing seasons, and his seven division titles are the fifth most in NFL coaching history. His teams have reached the playoffs eight times in 12 years but only twice in the last six seasons.

Twins beat Orioles, take AL Central lead

The Associated Press

BALTIMORE — Justin Morneau had three hits, including a long three-run homer, and the Minnesota Twins took over first place in the AL Central on Sunday, roughing up rookie Daniel Cabrera in an 8-4 victory over the Baltimore Orioles.

Mike Cuddyer also hit a home run and had three hits for the Twins, who won two of three from the Orioles to capture a third straight series for the first time since May 19.

Cabrera (8-4), who was 5-0 with a 1.90 ERA in eight starts since June 15, fell behind 6-0 in the second inning and didn't make it out of the sixth. He gave

AL Roundup

up eight runs and 11 hits, both season highs, in five-plus innings.

Miguel Tejada had two hits and scored twice for the Orioles, who missed an opportunity to move past Tampa Bay into third place in the AL East. Baltimore hasn't won a home series since taking two of three from Cleveland from May 7-9.

Kyle Lohse (4-7) allowed four runs and seven hits in five innings.

Twins 9, White Sox 2: Marcus Thames hit his first career grand

slam, and visiting Detroit overcame the ejections of starter Jeremy Bonderman and manager Alan Trammell.

Bonderman and Trammell were ejected in the second inning after Bonderman hit Chicago's Aaron Rowand with a pitch, minutes after Paul Konerko's homer.

Wilfredo Ledezma (1-0) allowed one run and four hits in 3 1/3 innings. Jon Garland (7-7) was the loser.

Mariners 6, Angels 2: Dave Hansen and Buckey Jacobson boughed to back Joel Poino (6-11), who allowed one run and struck out seven in eight innings, and Seattle took advantage of Kevin Gregg's record-tying wildness to avoid a three-game sweep.

Gregg threw four wild pitches in the eighth inning, tying the post-1900 major league regular-season record set by Walter Johnson in 1914 and matched by Phil Niekro in 1979.

Ramon Ortiz (3-6) gave up two runs and six hits over seven innings for visiting Anaheim.

Athletics 9, Rangers 2: Eric Chavez and Mark Kotsay homered for the second straight day and Eric Byrnes and Erubiel Durazo also homered for the host A's, who took two of three from the first-place Rangers to cut Texas' AL West lead to 2 1/2 games.

Rich Harden (5-5) didn't allow a hit until Gary Matthews Jr.'s two-out double in the fourth. John

Washin (1-2) allowed seven runs and 11 hits in 4 1/3 innings.

Indians 5, Royals 1: Cleveland (50-49) moved above .500 for the first time since it was 2-1 last year as Jake Westbrook (8-5) pitched a six-hit shutout to complete a four-game sweep of the visiting Royals.

Grady Sizemore hit his first major league homer for Cleveland.

Zack Greinke (2-8) gave up five runs and eight hits in 6 1/3 innings.

Blue Jays 5, Devil Rays 3: Carlos Delgado hit a three-run homer to become the first Blue Jays player to drive in 1,000 runs and Toronto completed a three-game sweep of visiting Tampa Bay.

Milton, Johnson throw gems, but must settle for frustration

The Associated Press

Philadelphia's Eric Milton was nearly unhit, and Arizona's Randy Johnson was dominant for eight innings.

Neither came away with a victory.

Milton threw eight hitless innings Sunday before the Chicago Cubs' Michael Barrett blooped a double just in front of center fielder Doug Glavine. That led to two runs and a no-decision, although the Phillies beat the Cubs 3-2 on Pat Burrell's RBI single in the ninth.

"I thought it would be trouble," Milton said of Barrett's hit. "I saw Doug stumble there. I had a pretty good idea it would drop. I still had three outs to get. That's a tough task. I'm seeing the replay in my head."

Johnson struck out a season-high 14 in what could be his final start for Arizona. The Diamondbacks wasted a ninth-inning lead and extended their team-record losing streak to 14 with a 3-2 loss to Colorado.

Johnson allowed six hits and walked none in eight innings, keeping the Diamondbacks in the game. The Big Unit ended up not factoring in the decision as the Rockies rallied against the bullpen in the ninth inning.

"I had stuff that wasn't too bad for a 40-year-old," Johnson said. At Philadelphia, the Phillies led 2-0 when Barrett was jammed by an 0-1 fastball leading off the ninth. It was Milton's 98th pitch.

Glavine, who replaced Ricky Ledee in the eighth, at first broke back, then charged in and just missed an attempt for a diving catch.

"I think I froze," Glavine said. Milton struck out pinch-hitters Jose Macias and Alex Gonzalez, giving him a season-high 12 strikeouts, but Mark Grudizlanek singled and Corey Patterson doubled, tying the score and chasing Milton. Ryan Madson



Randy Johnson, who was masterful for eight innings in perhaps his last start for Arizona, receives a standing ovation from the crowd.

(7-2) relieved and retired Sammy Sosa on a grounder.

LaTroy Hawkins (2-3) walked Jim Thome leading off the bottom half and Glavine sacrificed. Burrell drove the next pitch to deep right-center.

"This game has a lot of lows, some highs at the end, and then back to lows," Cubs manager Dusty Baker said.

Chicago's Mark Prior, pitching for the first time since leaving a game July 15 because of a tender elbow, allowed two runs and five hits in six innings.

Rockies 3, Diamondbacks 2: Johnson lowered his ERA to 2.68 and increased his major league-leading strikeout total to 174. Johnson has 198 games with 10 or more strikeouts, 17 shy of Nolan Ryan's record.

Arizona has had preliminary

talks about possible trades for Johnson, who's making \$16 million this year and is due \$16 million in 2005. Johnson, co-MVP of Arizona's World Series win over the New York Yankees in 2001, tipped his cap while receiving a standing ovation after the top of the eighth.

"I've always appreciated the fans and acknowledged them," Johnson said.

"They're aware of that," he said of the trade rumors, "and I wanted to acknowledge what they've always done for me."

Expos 6, Marlins 4: Livan Hernandez (7-10) threw six hitless innings and came within two outs of his second straight complete game, helping the host Expos to a three-game sweep.

Hernandez was perfect with two outs in the sixth, retiring the first 17 batters he faced before walking pinch-hitter Josh Willingham. He didn't allow a hit until Mike Lowell's double on the first pitch of the seventh.

Cardinals 6, Giants 0: Matt Morris (11-6) threw a seven-hit shutout for his seventh career shutout and 15th complete game, and the host Cardinals took advantage of Jerome Williams' wildness in the first of a seven-game series.

Padres 3, Dodgers 0: Adam Eaton (6-8) allowed one hit in seven innings. Phil Nevin and Brian Giles homered and the visiting Padres averted a three-game sweep.

Braves 4, Mets 3: Fielding errors by rookies David Wright and Kaz Matsui led to three unearned runs for visiting Atlanta and Mike Hampton (6-8) threw six innings.

Pirates 6, Reds 5: Pinch-hitter Rob Mackowiak drove in the go-ahead run with an RBI double in the fifth, helping the host Pirates come from behind and complete a three-game sweep of the Reds.

Astros 9, Brewers 1: Pete Munro (2-2) pitched seven shutout innings and Mike Lamb drove in three runs with two doubles for the host Astros, who have won four of their last five.

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Red Sox recharged after Yankees visit to Fenway

Boston's season looking up after series win

BY HOWARD ULMAN
The Associated Press

BOSTON — There's nothing like a series with the New York Yankees to fire up the Boston Red Sox.

With their season slipping away as the losses and lethargy grew, the Red Sox regained their intensity with a brawl, a winning home game against the AL's best closer and a power-packed show that had Democratic presidential candidate John Kerry cheering and high-fiving his hometown team.

"As quickly as you can feel bad about yourself, you can turn it around and feel good," Boston manager Terry Francona said.

Even with Sunday night's 9-6 win over their longtime rivals, the Red Sox trail the Yankees by 7½ games in the AL East. That's a lot better than the other possibilities after they tumbled 9½ games back when they blew a 4-1 lead Friday night and lost 8-7, their third loss in four games.

They won 11-10 Saturday night on Bill Mueller's ninth-inning homer off Mariano Rivera, then persevered Sunday after Hideki Matsui's grand slam cut their lead to 9-6 in the seventh.

These last two games were huge," said Johnny Damon, who had three hits Sunday, including a three-run homer. "It was a

World Series atmosphere."

The Red Sox nearly got there last year before losing to the Yankees 6-5 in the 11th inning of the seventh game of the AL championship series. That ended Boston's season in which the team was known for its intensity and its "Cowboy Up" mentality that helped them to rebound from adversity.

"We got the feeling back [Saturday] night," Kevin Millar said. "We had to get that swagger back that we had last year."

That energy had been missing recently. It was back during Saturday's third-inning brawl after Alex Rodriguez was hit by a pitch and stared at pitcher Bronson Arroyo.

Rodriguez and Boston catcher Jason Varitek exchanged words, and Varitek pushed him in the face. Both were ejected.

"Maybe that's something we needed," Damon said. "We do have a little more

"These last two games were huge. It was a World Series atmosphere."

Johnny Damon
Red Sox center fielder

fire in us."

Kerry saw that Sunday night from his seat next to the Boston dugout. He threw out the ceremonial first pitch then high-fived Millar after the first baseman's fourth homer of the series.

"He was fired up," Millar said. "I was just high-fiving the fans and his hand was the last one."

The Yankees, maintaining their usual even keel, weren't overly concerned about



Boston Red Sox's Kevin Millar gets a high five from Democratic presidential candidate Sen. John Kerry, D-Mass., after Millar hit a solo home run during the fifth inning Sunday.

the Red Sox, who lead the series 8-5 with six games left.

"You're never out of the race," New York manager Joe Torre said, but "I'm not worried about them. We don't play them anymore now for a while."

Like their team, Millar and pitchers Derek Lowe and Keith Foulke reversed their recent fortunes in the series.

Millar went 3-for-4 with four RBIs Sunday and 10-for-13 in the series with four homers and eight RBIs. He had just seven homers before that. Lowe (9-9) had one of his best outings Sunday night, when Foulke, who gave up Rodriguez's winning single Friday, recorded his 16th save in 21 chances.

Jose Contreras (8-4) was staked to a 2-0 lead in the first but struggled again against the Red Sox, allowing eight runs in 5½ innings. Contreras is 0-4 in five career appearances against Boston since the Yan-

kees outbid the Red Sox for him before last season.

"He wasn't good right from the get-go," Torre said. "We had a two-run lead and he just wasn't aggressive enough."

But the Yankees had a chance for a big inning in the eighth until a strange play ruined the threat.

With one out and runners at second and third, Jeter lined the ball off Foulke's leg. It bounced to catcher Doug Mirabello who threw to first hit Jeter as Enrique Wilson crossed the plate.

Home-plate umpire Hunter Wendelstedt ruled Jeter out for running inside the baseline and Wilson returned to third. Gary Sheffield then lined out to left-fielder Manny Ramirez.

"The rule doesn't make much sense," Jeter said. "The home-plate umpire said that I got hit when I was lunging for the bag. The bag is not in the lane you're supposed to run in."

Molitor, Eckersley made inspiring journeys to Hall

COOPERSTOWN, N.Y. — Life happens.

Sometimes it brings unbridled joy, like running around the bases in the World Series or throwing a slider past men swinging bats.

Sometimes it brings lasting pain in buckets, especially when relationships between loved ones become strained.

Phil Rogers

For more than an hour on a postcard Sunday afternoon along the Susquehanna River, Paul Molitor and Dennis Eckersley openly discussed the crooked paths and broken trails of the lives that led them to baseball's Hall of Fame.

When Eckersley had finished his induction speech, choking back tears repeatedly while discussing divorce and alcoholism and acknowledging his wheel-chair-bound father battling emphysema, as well as his older brother, Wally Jr., who is serving a 40-year sentence in Colorado for kidnapping and attempted murder, Molitor's face appeared as washed out as if he had been attending a funeral. He admitted later he'd been crying.

"I'm very familiar with some of the things he touched on," Molitor

said. "His life ... it definitely hit me. I was emotional, taken to tears by it. Plus knowing Dennis, knowing his heart, a part of his story rings bells. I've been through divorce in the last three years. I had problems with drugs early in my career. I know how tough this can be for families. You have to try to make something out of it, try to persevere through it."

Molitor, eighth all-time with 3,319 career hits, and Eckersley, once a 20-game winner as a starter and later a Most Valuable Player as a closer, were celebrated for their accomplishments in the 1980s and '90s.

Thousands of fans of the Milwaukee Brewers, Oakland Athletics and Boston Red Sox, among other teams, along with 50 Hall of Famers, turned out to welcome Eckersley and Molitor to the club. But when they returned to the center of this quaint village, they were talking more about relationships and survival than Molitor's short, quick swing or Eckersley's uncanny command.

Eckersley and Molitor could not talk about their alcoholism, less self-important. Both acknowledged the role spirituality has played in helping them overcome the obstacles they often put in their own way, citing their belief as Christians.

Both offered the usual thanks to youth coaches and parents but what others have shared away, thanking ex-wives and children who have survived broken



marriages.

Molitor, who has had children with two wives, one daughter almost grown and another not yet a year old, broke new ground by mentioning a son he had never publicly acknowledged.

While saying how much he loved his other children, he slipped in a reference to "Joshua and better times ahead." Afterward he said that his son is Toros-born to a woman he was with between marriages.

"I haven't gotten to know him very well," Molitor said. "I'm going to try to find a way to work on that relationship."

Eckersley knows about complicated relationships. He married his first wife, Denise, when he was 18, and lived with her in Cleveland, where he was a 20-year-old rookie playing for manager Frank Robinson.

Paul Molitor, left, and Dennis Eckersley were inducted into the Baseball Hall of Fame in a ceremony Sunday in Cooperstown, N.Y.

was going down and I was spiraling out of control personally."

"No one knew then, but I was facing a major battle with alcohol. I knew I had come to a crossroad in my life. With the grace of God I got sober and I saved my life. I was a new man, a renewed man," Eckersley stopped and gathered his thoughts. "It took a great deal of acceptance to come to terms with being an alcoholic," he said.

"That acceptance allowed me to come to terms with sobriety." He again had to regroup before thanking his second wife, Nancy. "Those were difficult, hard years," Eckersley said, "but you chose to stand by me. I am grateful for your love and support."

His feelings for Tony La Russa, his manager in Oakland and St. Louis, also run deep. Eckersley recalled how after some difficult losses La Russa would leave a note his locker saying, "You're the best, Eck."

La Russa couldn't attend the ceremony.

"He wrote me a three-page letter that was very moving," Eckersley said afterward. "He told me he loved me, but in a macho way."

"That's baseball. But for a little while on Sunday, the two newest Hall of Famers didn't let machismo get in the way of telling their stories. And they seemed bigger than ever because of it."

Phil Rogers is a sports columnist for the Chicago Tribune.

Teammates try to score without Williams' stunner

BY BOB EMANUEL JR.

The Miami Herald

MIAMI — Ricky Williams' unexpected retirement created a potential meltdown around the Miami Dolphins.

The opinions offered likely are tempered by the possibility — at least slight — that Williams could re-evaluate and return to the team.

Defensive end Jason Taylor declined to comment on the situation through a spokesman. Taylor did, however, issue a statement through his team: "This certainly is unexpected, but I know I would prefer to speak with Ricky and hear exactly where he is coming from before I make any comments on his decision."

In another statement released by the team, Dolphins owner Wayne Huizenga said: "I understand Ricky has some things he needs to work out and feels the best way to do that is to take some time away from the game."

"While his decision to do so is surprising, I know our players and coaches will meet the challenge this presents. We have a good team, and we are confident that we still will have a successful season," also known as General Manager Rick Spielman will continue to find ways to upgrade our team."

"I was definitely surprised," quipped Jay Fiedler said, "especially with the timing."

O.J. McDuffie, who played wide receiver for Miami from 1993 to 2001, was more direct.

"He really put his team in a bind," McDuffie said. "He could

have given them a little bit of advance notice, and they could have gone out and gotten some quality backs.... It's really a tough situation for the fans and the organization. It's his decision. He has to live with it."

"I was surprised, as everybody in the organization is," coach Dave Wannstedt said. "But it's a team game. Every great team meets challenges. Every great team has to overcome obstacles. And we have people at all positions that will do that."

There is no debate about the sudden, gaping hole in Miami's starting lineup. Wannstedt said Travis Minor, who has never started a game in the NFL and has just 144 punting attempts, enters training camp next weekend as the starter.

"I'm definitely excited about the opportunity," Minor said in a statement. "At the same time, I'm going to miss losing a teammate like Ricky, who has also been a friend. Hopefully, now I will have a bigger role, which I anticipate. I'm just going to work like I have been since I've been there, and I look forward to doing good things."

Fiedler, who must leave off former Philadelphia Eagles backup A.J. Feeley for the starting job, expressed confidence in Minor.

"He's been around here for three years," Fiedler said in a statement. "He's a heck of a back.... So we're going to expect him to continue making those plays, just a little bit more often than he has."

How to replace Williams just

adds to a litany of questions surrounding the team entering camp. Miami will have four new starters on its offensive line. The Dolphins also have three new key members on their offensive coaching staff, including first-year coordinator Chris Foerster.

Among the players available now who might fit are unemployed former starters James Stewart and Stacey Mack. Both are pounding runners who concentrate on going between the tackles.

"They're among the guys we've looked at," Spielman said.

Also mentioned was Chicago's Anthony Thomas and the solid group of runners in Minnesota: Michael Bennett, Onterio Smith, Mo Williams and rookie Mewelde Moore.

"I'm sure there will be some guys who come up as camp goes on," Spielman said. "We've looked at everybody's rosters and we'll call around to see what's out there."

Williams, who by belief was to be traveling to Asia on Saturday, said he had been contemplating the move for months. Despite his indecision during that span, he never consulted Wannstedt before Friday, when Williams phoned the coach from Hawaii to announce his plans.

"I was completely surprised," Wannstedt said. "My main thought process was to try to get Ricky to come back here, sit down, talk about some things and see if we can get this thing back on track."

"He obviously chose to go another direction."

Roddick, Davenport gaining momentum

The Associated Press

INDIANAPOLIS — Andy Roddick is taking a familiar route to the U.S. Open.

Roddick overwhelmed Nicolas Kiefer 6-2, 6-3 Sunday to win his second straight RCA Championships title.

The second-ranked American joined 1991-92 winner Pete Sampras as the only repeat champions since the event switched from clay to hard courts in 1988.

Last year, Roddick used the RCA Championships as a springboard to a 27-1 hard-court season that, including his first Grand Slam title at Flushing Meadows.

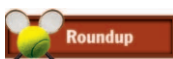
Roddick said that success doesn't mean anything, but he couldn't hide his optimism for a busy summer that includes the Athens Olympics.

"I'm happy I started off the summer on a good note," Roddick said after dominating Kiefer in less than an hour. "I'm starting to hit the ball from the baseline better, and the mental game is there, too."

Sefer can attest to that. The light-hitting German had no answer for Roddick's trademark blistering serve and powerful groundstrokes. Roddick broke Kiefer's serve in the fourth game to take the momentum, and Kiefer never recovered.

"I wasn't able to do it today," Kiefer said. "He broke me early in the first set, and I made it very easy for him."

The top-seeded Roddick ripped 10 aces, routinely topped 140 mph, including three in the final game to blow Kiefer away.



Davenport beats the other Williams

CARSON, Calif. — Another week, another tournament title over a Williams sister for Lindsay Davenport.

Davenport defeated top-seeded Serena Williams 6-1, 6-3 in just more than an hour Sunday to win the JPMorgan Chase Open, her fourth career title in eight finals appearances in her hometown tournament.

"I've practiced here since I was 5 or 6," Davenport said. "I feel really great being able to stay home."

A week ago, Davenport beat Venus Williams in a riveting three-set match to win the Bank of the West title at Stanford.

The victories ended Davenport's four-year losing streak to both sisters.

"The last 10 months I've been building a little bit stronger base physically," said Davenport, whose foot injury hampered her most of last year before she had off-season surgery. "I was able to withstand the power and be able to run down some balls. Pulling through a really close match last week has given me a lot of confidence."

In 1998, Davenport won at Stanford, Los Angeles and Carlsbad in consecutive weeks before winning her only U.S. Open title. She finished the year ranked No. 1.

Ricky: Williams' heart just wasn't in it

RICKY, FROM BACK PAGE

For months, ever since returning from a monthlong solo sojourn across Australia, Williams has figured he'd retire at the end of the upcoming season. One more year, he kept saying to himself, for my teammates and only for them. He even envisioned himself quitting right after winning the MVP trophy for the Dolphins in a triumphant Super Bowl.

But the more people Williams told about his desire to quit, the more disappointed he became in their reactions, and the more convinced he became that he couldn't take those Sunday beatings and wake up in pain for others anymore. All the yes-people in his life who always laughed a little too hard at his jokes suddenly become no-people for the first time, more interested in preserving their own place in his flash-bulb-filled universe than understanding why he didn't want to be at the center of it anymore.

Until the other day. When he went back to those days when football was the most fun for him, back before money and professional responsibilities got in the way of what was once just play.

He informed his former University of Texas coach, Mack Brown, that he was thinking about retiring right away, and Brown's reaction was immediate and freeing.

"Good for you," Brown said without hesitation. "Congratulations."

And Williams felt like a kid being let out into the playground at recess.

And then he was gone.

"No regrets," Williams said Sunday. "This feels right."

But we feel wronged.

He owed us more, owed his teammates more, didn't he? So the name-calling has commenced — "Loser! Quitter! Traitor! Drug-addict!" because Williams has dared to think and live for himself.

There are plenty of people booing Williams right now who would leap at the opportunity to quit their jobs with millions at 27 to go roam. But an athlete does it in his prime, wrecking a team's season, and we remove his right to run his own life because his workplace is our workplace, our escape.

The name-calling and hatred in South Florida?

"I'm prepared for that," Williams said. "It'll be fine."

Leaving all that money on the table? "I've been poor before," he says.

It's interesting, the way his workouts have been in the offseason, completely without the structure he abhors. He's in the best shape of his life, down to 220 pounds, and he did this by simply running and running and running every day until he didn't feel like running anymore. It was never 40 minutes or 60 minutes or 120 minutes. He would just run until his body and heart told him to quit.

And that's where we are today. Ricky Williams' heart has told him to stop running.

Don LeBard is a columnist for The Miami Herald.



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SPORTS



Franco reels in big one,
wins again in Milwaukee,
Page 30

Ricky remains tough to tackle

MIAMI — Ricky Williams doesn't know anything at all about the frenzy he has created in South Florida. What his wounded coach said Sunday? How his stunned teammates feel? The arguments all over this football-crazed city about whether his sudden retirement at 27 was extraordinary nobility or selfish stupidity? He hasn't so much as checked his answering machine.

"Why should I?" he said late Sunday night by cell phone from Asia. "Does it matter? I don't care. It doesn't have anything to do with me anymore. No one can reach me, and that's how I want it. For what? For people to put more of their excitement on me? I'm OK without it, thanks."

"Why do people have to be so judgmental about this? I'm going in search of the truth. Everything I'm doing in my life now is about finding the truth. Football isn't part of the truth for me anymore."

Dan LeBatard



He kept getting so much resistance at every turn. Williams would tell people he was thinking about retiring, and they would try to dissuade him or call him an idiot or just start yelling at him. His agents, his handlers, his coaches and too many people with vested interests who Williams thought were his friends kept trying to pull Williams back, but all they did in the end was push him away — all the way to another country, all the way out of football.

"They made me quit that much faster," Williams said. "I don't respond to being told I shouldn't. It makes me want to do those things more. . . . Everybody was being so selfish,

thinking that I shouldn't retire for their reasons instead of really listening to mine. I kept saying I'd be happier without football, but they didn't seem to hear that part. I'm convinced of this. I'm not coming back."

You think he sounds confused? No, no, no. He has never been quite so clear. All he ever dreamed about as a kid was being a college football player. That was the destination, not the starting point, and he rushed for more yards in college than any running back ever. He played pro football after that only because he was confused and young and lonely and depressed and unsure of who he was or what he wanted to be, and everyone else made it seem like it would be the greatest thing in the world, being a pro football player, even if the spotlight and the fame were never for him. He's still not sure of what he wants to be, but he's more sure than ever what he doesn't want to be — a football player.

SEE RICKY ON PAGE 34



Dolphins coach Dave Wannstedt speaks about running back Ricky Williams' decision to retire.

Seeing things differently



Red Sox batter Johnny Damon and Yankees catcher Jorge Posada watch Damon's three-run homer in the second inning Sunday in Boston. The Red Sox won two of three from New York to revive their hopes of catching the AL East leaders. See story on Page 32.



Busch begins 'Chase'
by winning at Loudon;
Earnhardt gets relief

Page 30



Molitor, Eckersley
share bond beyond
Hall of Fame

Page 32

Roddick, Davenport on a roll on hard courts Page 34

